

***Staff Sexual Misconduct:
The Agency and the News
Media***

July 2004

Challenge

Enhancing our ability to respond

- Unsupported Assertions
- Statements without Proof
- Limited evidence
- Can the Media be Controlled ?

YOU ARE NOT IN CONTROL!

MEDIA BASICS

- **Rights and Responsibilities of the Justice Agency**
 - >Public Information
 - >Building Public Confidence in Corrections

The New Century:

- Information age;
 - Sources of information everywhere
- 24/7 news media;
- You may be “today’s” news – it is a slow news day; and
- Deadlines are NOW.

News Media Culture

- Ratings & Readership are everything
- Fathomless news Hole
- Revolution in the Way of obtaining Information
- Internet
- Freewheeling
- Entertainment/Tabloid news

Seven C's of NEWS

- Catastrophe
- Crisis
- Conflict
- Crime
- Corruption
- Color (human Interest)
- Change

Sources of Conflict:

- Competing interests of your organization and the media;
- “Sensational” aspects of sex-related cases; and
- Appearance of secrecy or lack of being forthcoming by the agency.
 - Past history

What affects your relationship with the media?

- Location in the US
 - Quality of media
- Your agency's reputation
 - Past cases
 - What the community thinks of you
 - Responsiveness to the media
 - Quality of PIO
 - Openness or perceived openness of the "boss"
- Other sources of information
 - Unions, prosecutor, investigating organization

Policies and Procedures

- Media policy exists
- Staff are trained
- PIO is:
 - Qualified
 - In the loop
 - Responsive
- Up-to-date media guide, materials

Establishing or Fixing Your Relationship

- The middle of a crisis is NOT the time to build a relationship with the media
- Communicate routinely with the media about what's happening
- Build relationships with the reporters who routinely cover you
- Other ways?

Sexual Misconduct Allegation

- Decide who speaks
- Now or later ?
- Opportunity to get out your message:
 - Zero tolerance
 - Conduct not tolerated
 - Majority of staff are good
 - We take this seriously
- Tell staff something.

Proactive

- The media may/will find out that you have a new initiative?
 - Staff
 - Inmates
- Motives?
- Responses?
- Involvement of the community leadership in initiative.
- Involve your PIO staff in what you are doing

Developing a Media Policy

- Public awareness is essential
- Zero tolerance policy needs to be shared
- Establish media relationships before they are critical
- Establish Guidelines

Developing a Media Policy

continued...

- MOU with other law enforcement agencies.
- Have a trained, designated media relations person and a back-up.
- Procedures for emergency notification
- Templates for Press Releases
- Information Do's and Don'ts
- Contact protocols

Your are the Spokesperson

Now what do you do?



Do's & Don'ts of Good Media Relations...

Do's

- Get interview approved
- Remember a reporter is always collecting information
- Be Accurate
- Develop good relationships with media
- Give equal time to major media sources

Do's & Don'ts of Good Media Relations continued...

Do's

- Be prompt in response to media requests
- Remember reporter (media) are generalists and may not understand your operation
- Control press movement, especially in a crisis

Do's & Don'ts of Good Media Relations continued...

Do's

- Understand the adversary role of the media
- Do your homework

Do's & Don'ts of Good Media Relations continued...

Don'ts

- Do not say “no comment”
- Do not respond if you don't know the answer
- Don't be pressured
- Stop talking if you have nothing to say

Do's & Don'ts of Good Media Relations continued...

Don'ts

If you have a mess, say so. You want the story to run only for one day !

General Media TIPS

(Rules of the Game)

- Talk from the standpoint of the public interest not the department's interest
- Speak in personal terms whenever possible
- If you don't want a statement quoted, don't say it
- State the most important facts first

General Media TIPS

(Rules of the Game continued...)

- Never say “No comment”, do say, “ I don’t know, but I will find out, or I’m sorry, but I cannot discuss that right now”
- Don’t try to wing it. R&R (Research and Rehearse)
- Think up the 10 worst possible questions that you could be asked and R&R

General Media TIPS

(Rules of the Game continued...)

- If a question contains offensive or inappropriate language, do not repeat them, even to deny them
- Don't argue with a reporter, remember they have the last say
- Do not lose your cool
- Tell the truth, even if it hurts.. They probably already know the answer

General Media TIPS

(Rules of the Game continued...)

- Control the interview
 - be friendly but firm
 - correct the reporters error
 - make sure the reporter understands
 - provide a fact sheet
- Answer only the questions asked..don't volunteer information
- Don't rush to speak, take time to think

General Media TIPS

(Rules of the Game continued...)

- TV Interview Tips
 - ignore the camera
 - look the reporter in the eye
 - lean slightly towards the reporter and keep your eyes steady
- Transmit three vibes
 - Glad to be there
 - Concern..I really care
 - authority...I know what I'm talking about

General Media TIPS

(Rules of the Game continued...)

- Be on guard; talk show host can be friendly on the informal, but zap you during the interview.
- “off the record” does not exist
 - consider all mikes as hot
 - assume all public meetings have a reporter there
- Treat media friendly and fairly..no jokes and cute remarks

Last but not least ...

K.I.S.S.

Keep it Short and Simple

Focus of Response...

- Consult subject matter experts
- Understand Potential Public/Inmate Reaction
- Caring and Commitment
- Remember the Court of public opinion
“drive time”
- Timely response

Focus of Response continued...

- Policy and privacy issues
- Positive assertions
- Define not defend

Responding to Allegations

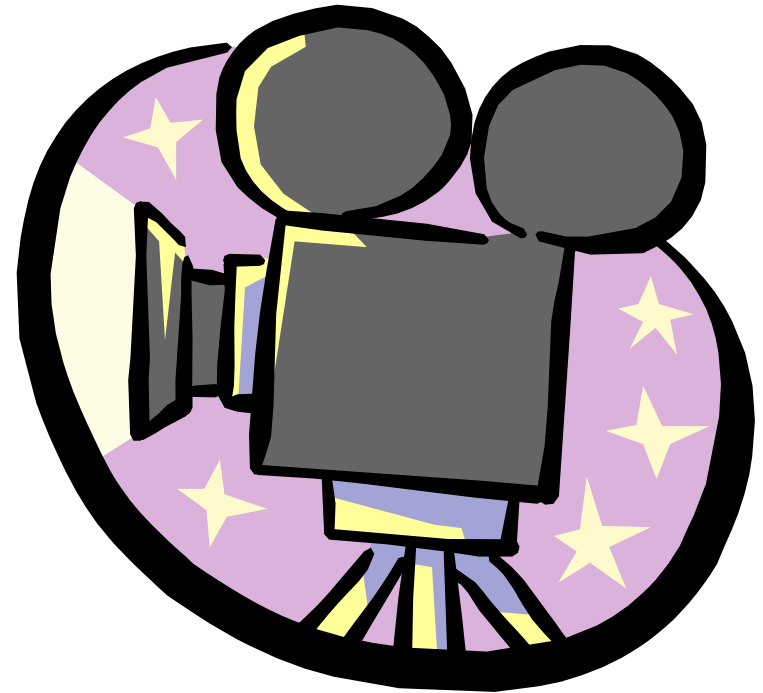
- Controlling the message
- Coordinating the Message
- Consistently presenting the message

The Community

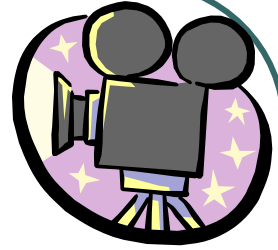
- Have a plan
 - Citizens Advisory Committees
 - Publications
 - Positive news articles
 - Public speaking
 - Tours

PEER EXPERIENCE WITH THE MEDIA.

Let's share some real live experiences with the media and how we handled them..



PEER EXPERIENCE WITH THE MEDIA.



Think about the TV and newspaper coverage your agency has received in response to a crisis. How about coverage when there is not an event? What can be gained, and what can be lost by communicating with the media before a major event--- such as allegations of staff sexual misconduct ? What are the implications for your agency?

Conclusions

- Media is always there
- Understand that you have limited control
- Find your circle of influence and work in it
- Use opportunities to get your message out