

County of Monterey Board Policy Manual

Policy Name County Media Policy	Policy Number	Page
	G-145	1 of 3
Policy Category Government and Administration		

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish media guidelines for Monterey County employees, elected officials and appointees that emphasize Monterey County's desire for transparency in government. Public trust and confidence in the County are dependent upon open and honest communication with its residents.

The goal of the Monterey County Media Policy is to provide guidelines for successful communications with the media and to define procedures that ensure the media receives accurate and prompt information.

These guidelines are provided for use by County staff, elected officials and members of county commissions, panels and advisory boards. These guidelines can be used by individual departments to create additional or enhanced communication guidelines to address unique media needs.

II. Background

A positive working relationship with information outlets is a key component of a communications program.

The County Media Policy was developed in 2009 and updated in 2017 to guide Department Heads, employees and the County Communications Coordinator in their communications with the media and the public.

When referring to "media" the term includes newspaper, magazine, radio, television and internet outlets.

III. Policy

It is the policy of the County that:

1. Designated county employees should respond to public or media inquiries they receive in an appropriate, timely manner
2. County employees should follow the approved County Media Guidelines and/or the guidelines developed specifically designed for their department.

IV. Procedure

MEDIA INQUIRIES

Media inquiries regarding County operations should be handled in a professional and timely manner. Most media deadlines are daily, so press inquiries should be referred or returned the same day.

Although any County employee, appointed or elected official may receive a media inquiry, the inquiry should be directed to the individuals designated to respond to media inquiries. It is recommended that each County Department, Advisory Panel or Commission or other appointed body designate a person to handle media inquiries. All other members of each department or body should be aware who is to receive media calls and/or speak to the press. If a department chooses not to have an employee manage media calls, those calls can be directed to the County Communications Coordinator.

Elected Officials in Monterey County routinely receive media inquiries related to various departments. Elected Officials should avoid speaking on behalf of the entire County unless they are representing a position or policy adopted by the Board of Supervisors.

The County Administrative Officer may address media inquiries regarding issues of countywide policy or defer questions to the appropriate department.

Department Heads or a designee should address media inquiries about policies or issues impacting their department or designate an alternative. If an issue has the potential for countywide impact or is of a critical nature, the Department Head or designee should alert the CAO and the Board of Supervisors.

Members of County Commissions and Panels are responsible for answering queries regarding decisions made by that body. Members who vote in the minority may express their dissent, but should respect the majority decision. Also, individual members should refrain from speaking on behalf of the entire group, unless specifically asked to do so by that body.

OFFICIAL RELEASES OF INFORMATION

Each County Department may wish to inform the public about unique information or services it provides by developing public or news messages. The Department Head, Elected Official or his/her designee is the person authorized to develop, approve and release such information.

Information can be released by news release, interviews, response to media inquiry, news conferences, website post or social media.

News releases/messages should be informative and accurate. The “Monterey County Press Release Guideline” is available at <http://www.in.co.monterey.ca.us/policies/related-policy-documents>. Copies of news messages should be kept by the issuing Department and should be sent to the Communications Coordinator for additional distribution as needed.

Social Media is widely used by the community and press to find information. See separate Social Media Usage Policy, O-70 for specific information about county use of Social Media.

News conferences are a useful method for releasing critical information to the press at one time. News conferences should be done on an as needed basis and are not suitable for all types of information releases. The County Communications Coordinator is available to assist Departments to determine if a News Conference is needed and to coordinate such an event if desired.

COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

The Communications Coordinator is located in the CAO's office and is the primary liaison between the media and the County and is available to assist County Departments who do not have a designated media contact.

The Communications Coordinator can assist departments, elected officials and advisory body members with media queries, news releases, news conferences and interviews as needed.

The Communications Coordinator shall develop and provide training opportunities for County staff on media relations as needed.

PUBLIC RECORDS

All information that is determined to be a public record will be made available to the media and the public in accordance with the California Public Records Act. Public Records Requests are typically made to a specific department, the Communications Coordinator or County Counsel; however, any County employee, appointed or elected official can receive a public records request.

If such a request is received, time is critical. Please refer the request to the department staff person assigned to process Public Records Requests as soon as possible. If no person is designated or if there are questions regarding the request, employees should contact their supervisor, Department Head or the department's County Counsel.

V. Review Date

- a. This Policy will be reviewed for continuance by [*date*].

VI. Board Action

- a. Legistar File Number, *date*.