



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE MEDIA GUIDELINES

*Adopted by the Executive Management Team
March 22, 2007*

PURPOSE

The Department of Juvenile Justice will allow access to juvenile justice programs by the news media, while ensuring that the confidentiality rights of all juveniles are protected, the integrity and security of programs are not compromised, and the safety of visitors, juvenile offenders and staff are not endangered.

These guidelines pertain to any and all facilities or locations either operated by or under contract to the Department, where services are provided to juveniles under the jurisdiction of the Department.

RESPONSIBILITY/DUTIES:

Chapter 985.04, Florida Statutes, prohibits access to juvenile offender information. However, the Secretary of the Department of Juvenile Justice or designee may allow access to juvenile offender information when it is determined there is sufficient reason to do so.

Communications Office

To ensure that all responses from the Department fully address the request, the Department asks that all such requests be made in writing, including a list of questions or information, telephone number and contact person for additional information or clarification. Each request will be forwarded to and examined by the Communications Director where the facts will be clarified. The Communications Office will then coordinate with the necessary divisions to secure the information. All material will then be forwarded to the Communications Office for review in consultation with General Counsel's staff as needed prior to release.

Office of the Secretary

If the request includes matters directly pertaining to any juvenile in the Department's custody or the request is for information that would allow the confidentiality of a juvenile to be compromised, the Secretary will determine whether there is sufficient reason for release.

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The mission of the Department of Juvenile Justice is to increase public safety by reducing juvenile delinquency through effective prevention, intervention and treatment services that strengthen families and turn around the lives of troubled youth.

STANDARDS/PROCEDURES

Visits by News Media to Department of Juvenile Justice Programs & Requests for Interviews with Individual Juvenile Offenders

- Permission for visits by news media representatives to Department of Juvenile Justice programs shall be granted subject to the conditions outlined by these guidelines.
- These guidelines shall apply to news media requests to all programs operated by or under contract with the Department of Juvenile Justice.
- Requests for visits to Department programs will be granted, with approval authority resting with the Secretary or designee, after consultation with the Department General Counsel's staff and the Communications Director.
- Requests for interviews with individual juvenile offenders in the custody of the Department will be handled on a case-by-case basis, with approval authority resting with the Secretary or designee, after consultation with the Department General Counsel and the Communications Director.
- Requests to interview juvenile offenders must be made in writing to the Communications Office, located at the headquarters office in Tallahassee.
- A brief description of the purpose of the interview and subject/questions should accompany all requests for interviews.
- News media representatives should provide adequate identification to verify that they are employed by or contracting with a news agency.
- Approval for interviews and visits to DJJ programs will be granted by the Secretary or designee, provided that such visits will not impair or disrupt the normal operations or security of the program or facility, and will not endanger the safety of the visitor(s), juvenile offenders and program/facility employees.
- The Communications Office is to be notified of requests for media visits prior to the visit. Interviews and visits will be conducted during normal business hours (Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.), with holidays and weekends excluded except in certain instances.
- The use of photographic, video or recording equipment, including any identifying information, will be restricted to protect the confidentiality of youth in custody.
- The Communications Office is to be notified prior to any event or activity that would place a juvenile offender in the public arena where news media coverage of the event or activity would be likely or invited.

- The Juvenile Justice chief probation officer/circuit manager, residential director, detention regional director, or designee may use discretion in restricting areas of the facility to be toured by members of the news media.
- It is the responsibility of the chief probation officer/circuit manager, residential regional director, detention regional director, or designee to assign staff to escort news media at all times on any tours and to be present during any interviews to ensure that safety and security are not compromised and that programming is not disrupted.
- News media representatives will respect the privacy and confidentiality rights of juvenile offenders.
- News media representatives are prohibited from using confidential information that might be divulged during conversations with juveniles or visits to facilities.
- After receiving approval from the Communications Office to visit a program or facility, news media representatives will sign a release form stating they will abide by Florida law prohibiting the release of confidential information pertaining to juvenile offenders.
- Access to juveniles in secure detention will not be considered until the court process is completed.
- Requests to interview juveniles held in secure detention, residential or correctional facilities must be made directly to the facility superintendent, who will consult with the Juvenile Justice regional director for detention, the General Counsel's staff and the Communications Office. The Secretary or designee has final approval authority for these requests.
- The Juvenile Justice circuit manager, regional director, or designee will ensure that the juvenile and his/her parent(s) or legal guardian(s) complete the attached release form when approving interviews, photographs, or audio or video taping of a juvenile. The appropriate circuit Juvenile Justice program office or regional office for future reference will retain the original form.

Special Events or Activities Involving Juvenile Offenders

- Any program planning a special event or activity that will place a juvenile in the public arena will contact the Communications Office to coordinate the event with the news media for the purpose of ensuring the confidentiality of the juvenile.
- The Juvenile Justice circuit manager, regional director or designee will ensure that the juvenile and his/her parent(s) or legal guardian complete the attached release form prior to a juvenile participating in any special event or activity where there is a potential for news media coverage.
- The Juvenile Justice circuit manager, regional director or designee will ensure that the Communications Office has been notified and that the event coordinators have agreed to notify the news media that attendance at or coverage of the event or activity acknowledges the news media outlet's agreement to keep the identity of the juveniles confidential.