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December 19, 2024

ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATION
NUMBER 005

OPR: PUBLIC INFORMATION

PUBLIC INFORMATION

I. GENERAL

This Alabama Department of Corrections (ADOC) Administrative Regulation (AR) establishes responsibilities, policies, and procedures implementing and coordinating Communications and Public Relations. Its purpose is to establish guidelines for the provision of information to the public and for staff and offender contacts with the media.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the ADOC to maintain positive, informative relationships with the public, the media, and other agencies with related functions, consistent with the security and privacy interests of the Department, its staff, and the inmates confined in the ADOC institutions.

III. DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

- A. **Facility News Contact**: An individual designated by the Warden/Designee to coordinate dissemination of information and statements concerning institutional activities as coordinated through the Public Information Manager (PIM).
- B. **News Media**: News publications, accredited news services such as the Associated Press, online news sources, licensed radio, and television broadcast stations or networks, and government franchised community cable television systems that originate scheduled news programming. This includes newspapers and magazines, published at least weekly or monthly and containing news and featured articles appealing to a broad spectrum of interest. News media excludes broadcast programs syndicated by independent producers, television stations, or networks for the primary purpose of entertainment, and syndicated television broadcast talk shows.

- C. **Public Information Manager (PIM)**: An individual designated to coordinate dissemination of information and statements concerning departmental activities. The PIM directs the Department's Public Information Office.
- D. **Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)**: Policies and procedures set forth by local orders and implemented by the Warden/Director of each facility/division.

IV. **RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A. The PIM is responsible for disseminating information about the Department in an accurate and timely manner to the public, the media, and other state agencies.
- B. All ADOC and contracted employees are responsible for adhering to this regulation.
- C. Wardens/Directors are responsible for developing their institutional or divisional SOPs, as necessary, for the implementation of this AR.

V. **PROCEDURES**

- A. The ADOC, as a public agency, shall manage contacts with the public and media in such a manner as to ensure accurate dissemination of information and appropriate access to the institutions without disruption of security or operational routines.
- B. Media Contact:
 - 1. Release of information to the news media or public, concerning ADOC, shall be authorized by the Commissioner or a Designee through the Public Information Office.
 - a. The PIM will coordinate all departmental media releases throughout the state.
 - b. The PIM receives regular internal reports of all incidents or events that may generate media interest.
 - c. Incidents that may generate media interest may include but are not limited to:
 - (1) Escapes;
 - (2) Fatal Incidents;
 - (3) Incidents involving high-profile inmates;

- (4) Mass disturbances;
 - (5) Fights resulting in hospitalization;
 - (6) Suicides;
 - (7) Fires;
 - (8) Major damage to state property; and
 - (9) All civilian arrests for any reason while on institution property.
- d. Each facility will designate an appropriate Facility News Contact for coordinating the public information and community relations programs.
 - e. Field personnel in facilities and offices shall notify the PIM of any contact with the news media as soon as possible and no later than the next business day.
 - f. The PIM is on call and should be available to the media at all times through ADOC.Media@doc.alabama.gov.
- 2. If a reporter or news media representative contacts an employee of ADOC for an interview, that employee or their supervisor shall notify the PIM and gain approval before speaking with the news media.
 - 3. To ensure accurate news media coverage, once an interview has been granted, employees will limit their comments to the area of their immediate responsibilities and avoid speculative comments.
 - 4. In facility matters, Wardens may release certain information of an immediate nature when requested by the news media.
 - a. This information should only include incarceration details from the public website.
 - b. The PIM should be notified prior to the release of any information.
 - c. If an incident is under investigation, it is inappropriate and/or premature to make additional comments or releases. Extreme caution must be exercised so as not to release anything that would jeopardize the investigation process.

- d. The PIM will be contacted as soon as possible and given a report on the action taken.
5. In the event of a negative incident that has attracted the attention of the news media, or has the potential to attract the news media, the Warden, or other designated duty officer shall contact the PIM or designee immediately, supplying all details.
 - a. The PIM is on call and should be available to the media at all times through ADOC.Media@doc.alabama.gov.
 - b. The PIM will offer appropriate assistance and will be prepared to take over spokesperson responsibilities when appropriate.
6. Employees shall not initiate contact with the news media to report critical incidents without the authorization of the Commissioner/Designee, or the PIM.
7. When an investigation and/or litigation is anticipated or pending, contracted or ADOC employees shall make no comment about matters under investigation or litigation unless authorized to do so by the Commissioner/Designee, or the PIM and after consultation with the Legal Division concerning the release of any information regarding such cases.
8. Contracted or ADOC employees who are interviewed shall not endanger the lives of staff or inmates or compromise the security of any institution, center, or office by revealing classified information.

C. Interviews with Employees:

1. The ADOC will provide accurate information in response to media inquiries regarding employees. Incidents within institutions involving staff are often newsworthy including acts of heroism, volunteerism, or community involvement that merit attention.
2. Employees on duty may be interviewed by the news media with their consent, provided the interview does not interfere with institution security. The PIM will be notified in advance of any employee interview, with approval obtained through the necessary authority.

D. Data on Employees:

1. Employee information will not be released if the information would endanger the employee, or the employee is a victim of a crime. The following information about an employee may be released to the media:

- a. Full name;
 - b. Current assignment;
 - c. Length of service with the ADOC;
 - d. Past assignments; and
 - e. Salary.
2. Information about employees, or inmates, that may not be released:
- a. Psychiatric or medical;
 - b. Juvenile crimes;
 - c. Information about prior arrests if not considered public record (prior convictions can be released);
 - d. Information concerning victims of a crime unless on the indictment;
 - e. Names and addresses of an inmate's or employee's family; and
 - f. Employee's address, social security number, and/or medical and beneficiary information.

E. Facility Visits:

High school student tours of facilities not classified as close custody may be arranged at the discretion of the Commissioner/Designee or the PIM.

1. Children in the custody of juvenile justice system cannot tour prisons.
2. Children under sixteen (16) years of age must be accompanied by a parent/legal guardian on a tour. The parent/legal guardian and child must sign the ADOC form 005-A, *Visitor Release*.
3. Teachers and counselors cannot serve as legal guardians and accompany a child, under sixteen (16), on a tour. Only the child's parent or actual legal guardian as named by the court can accompany a child, under sixteen (16), on a tour.
4. Children ages sixteen (16) to eighteen (18) must have a waiver signed by the parent/legal guardian, but the parent/legal guardian is NOT required to attend the tour.

5. Children under sixteen (16) years of age visiting an institution for religious programs MUST be accompanied by a parent/legal guardian. The parent/legal guardian and child must sign the ADOC Form 005-A, *Visitor Release*.
6. Visitors who do not abide by the facility regulations and/or by the instructions of the employee conducting the tour will be immediately escorted from the grounds.
7. A tour shall not begin until the visitor(s) have signed an ADOC Form 005-A, *Visitor Release*, as appropriate. Relatives and/or friends of inmates will not be permitted to tour the facility under any circumstances without the prior approval of the Commissioner.
8. All visitors at any facility are subject to search before entering.
9. All visitors at any facility must wear proper attire as determined by ADOC AR 303, *Annex A*. When necessary, a facility may require an appropriate change of clothes.
10. An inmate is permitted to address tour groups at facilities not classified as close custody at the discretion of the Commissioner/Designee or the PIM.
11. An inmate is permitted to give religious related testimonies during religious programs only.
12. An inmate is permitted to participate in speaking engagements both religious and non-religious away from the facility. Parents/legal guardians are not required to sign a waiver when an inmate participates at a speaking engagement away from the facility.

F. Media Facility Visits/Inmate Interviews:

1. Media requests for facility visits / inmate interviews shall be communicated to the Public Information Office by email to:
ADOC.Media@doc.alabama.gov. Do not contact facilities directly. Prior to the formal approval process, media representatives must provide written consent from an inmate for an interview.
2. Media representatives do not have the automatic right to visit any ADOC facility. However, access may be granted at the discretion of the commissioner or the PIM. Access is subject to limitations necessary to maintain order and security and to always protect the well-being of the inmate. Media representatives who have been approved to visit a facility must:

- a. Present proper identification.
 - b. Wear proper attire as determined by ADOC AR 303, *Annex A*. When necessary, a facility may require an appropriate change of clothes.
 - c. Be accompanied by a member of the Public Information Office or a facility representative.
 - d. Media representatives may not be listed on an inmate's active visitation list if they wish to be recognized as media by the Public Information Office. Any media representative on an inmate's active visitation list will not be allowed to visit that inmate as a media representative. The organization affiliated with the media representative on the inmate's active visitation list may also not be able to visit the inmate.
3. Any media equipment will be subject to normal search procedures and will only be allowed in facilities with permission of the Commissioner, PIM, or facility representative.
 4. Inmates may not receive any compensation for interviews of any type.
 5. Requests for interviews with inmates may be denied when such interview would, at the discretion of the Commissioner, PIM, or facility representative, jeopardize the security of the facility or the well-being of the inmate. Factors to be taken into consideration when making this determination include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Inmate has had one or more disciplinary reports that resulted in the imposition of sanctions within the past 24 months.
 - b. Inmate has had one or more disciplinary reports for the possession of contraband, including cell phones, that resulted in the imposition of sanctions.
 - c. Inmate has had one or more disciplinary reports for acts of violence against another inmate, a visitor, or an ADOC employee that resulted in the imposition of sanctions.
 - d. Inmate is under a sentence that prohibits contact with any person, such as a victim or witness.
 - e. Inmate is under investigation, indictment, or a sentence for an offense that relates to the introduction of contraband, including cell phones, into a prison, jail, or similar facility.

- f. Inmate is under sentence for an offense that relates to tampering with witnesses, tampering with evidence, obstruction of a law enforcement officer, or similar conduct.
 - g. Inmate is a juvenile, under a death sentence, has a security classification of 'close' or higher, or is housed in isolation, restrictive housing, or any other specialized living unit.
 - h. Inmate is under investigation, indictment, or a sentence relating to criminal conduct allegedly committed while in ADOC custody.
 - i. Inmate has had one or more prior visitors who introduced or attempted to introduce contraband into an ADOC facility.
 - j. Proposed project will be used in a documentary entertainment production that glorifies, promotes, or sensationalizes criminal activity.
 - k. Proposed project would cause unrest, disturb the good order of the institution, or bring notoriety to an offender or a specific offense.
 - l. Proposed project would compromise the privacy of inmates and staff.
 - m. Inmate is a confirmed member of a security threat group.
6. The reason for denial of an interview will only be disclosed if it poses no privacy or security risk.
 7. Disregard of ADOC policy or procedures, SOPs, and security safeguards will result in the immediate termination of the visit and may result in refusal of future access to the facility for that particular news media representative.
 8. Media access to any facility or office may be suspended during a critical incident or emergency and for a reasonable time thereafter.

G. Interviewing and Photographing Inmates:

1. News media representatives may be permitted to interview a specific inmate if he/she agrees to the interview and under the following conditions:
 - a. The Commissioner/Designee or PIM must approve the interview before it is granted.
 - b. Upon an interview request, inmates will be required to sign the ADOC Form 005-B, *Inmate Consent*, if he/she agrees voluntarily to be

photographed or recorded in such a way that the inmate will be identified.

- c. The ADOC allows inmates to speak to the media over the phone if the inmate is willing to participate in the interview process. The ADOC does not, however, coordinate or facilitate inmate interviews. The interviewer must send a letter to the inmate and request a phone call.
2. The inmate must sign the ADOC Form 005-B, *Inmate Consent*, before such pictures may be taken.
 - a. The original will be forwarded to Central Records for the inmate's file.
 - b. One copy will be placed in the facility file.
3. Inmates may not receive any compensation for interviews with the news media, nor profit from their crime either materially or through enhanced status as a result of media coverage.
4. The Commissioner, PIM, and/or Warden/Designee will determine the length of the inmate interviews. Any interview may be terminated if it is imposing a serious drain on the staff and use of the institutions, or if the interviewer and/or his or her crew behave in such a way as to endanger the security of the institution or community.
5. Inmates will not be allowed to hold news conferences.
6. Inmates may be photographed without their signed consent if they are in a public location or in a group shot which does not single out any individual, such as yard or dining hall activity.
 - a. Photographs which do not reveal an inmate's identity may be taken without authorization of the inmate.
 - b. Photographers or reporters may be asked to desist and leave the premises if the staff feels security measures may be threatened.
7. When any situation has attracted the attention of numerous media outlets, an informative press conference may be held at the initiation and discretion of the Commissioner and/or PIM.
 - a. Such press conferences will be held at an appropriate location at a facility or Central Office.
 - b. Media will receive at least one hour of notice, and as much as 24 hours of notice when possible.

c. Media representative will be notified by email.

H. Executions:

1. News media witnesses will be determined as follows:
 - a. One reporter from the Associated Press.
 - b. Two print reporters, including one reporter from within the county or closest to the county of conviction. If more than one agency from this county is present, witness privileges will be determined by draw.
 - c. Two broadcast reporters, including one reporter from within the county or closest to the county of conviction. If more than one agency from this county is present, witness privileges will be determined by draw.
2. All news media representatives shall present valid identification upon admission to the media center or institution, including names, phone numbers, and agency contacts.
3. All news media representatives are asked to wear business professional attire with stable footwear to ensure safety.
4. Electronic, photographic, mechanical, or artistic paraphernalia will not be permitted in the execution witness room.
5. News media representatives will be escorted as a group to the witness room where they will be cleared for security purposes.
6. Interviews will not be conducted immediately prior to or after the execution in the witness viewing area or on the grounds of Holman Correctional Facility. Interviews may be done at the media center following an execution.
7. Failure to comply with ADOC regulations regarding the witnessing of an execution or any behavior that may endanger the security of the institution or community will be grounds to refuse access.

VI. DISPOSITION

Any forms used will be disposed of and retained according to the Departmental Records Disposition Authority (RDA).

VII. ANNEXES AND FORMS

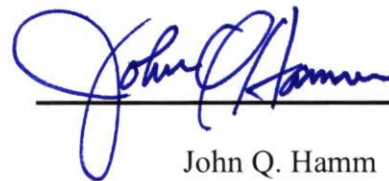
- A. ADOC Form 005-A, *Visitor Release Form*
- B. ADOC Form 005-B, *Inmate Consent Form*

VIII. SUPERSEDES

- A. This Administrative Regulation supersedes AR 005, *Public Information*, dated March 21, 2023, and any changes.

IX. PERFORMANCE

- A. Code of Alabama 1975, 14-1-1.1 *et seq.*
- B. Code of Alabama 1975, 15-18-81.
- C. Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 2002.



John Q. Hamm
Commissioner

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
VISITOR RELEASE FORM



I do hereby agree to abide by all rules and directions under which this tour is to be made; further, I release and save harmless the State of Alabama, the ADOC, and its agents, for any damage or harm, mental or physical, should any occur during, or as a result of, the visit this date

of _____ to _____ or any
(date) (Facility/Property)

other ADOC property.

NAME

SIGNATURE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
INMATE CONSENT FORM



The undersigned does hereby consent to be photographed and/or interviewed by news media representatives. The interviews may also include a recording thereof.

The undersigned consents and authorizes that any such photographs or interview material may be utilized by the news media through their normal sources.

Furthermore, the undersigned does hereby release and does save harmless the Alabama Department of Corrections, its agents and servants, from all claims for damage for libel, slander, invasion of the right of privacy, or any other claim based on the sue of said material. I give the above consent freely and voluntarily without promises, threats, or duress.

Date _____ Signature _____

Address _____

Witnessed By _____

Address _____

