

ORC:
OAC: 5101:2-33-21
CFSR:
Board:
Other: _____

Next Review Date: November 2021
Last Review Date: November 2018
Review Responsibility: Director of Communications Division

FCCS PROCEDURE

NO.: 2B

**SUBJECT: MEDIA RELATIONS FOR FCCS AND
MANAGED CARE**

Approved by: Executive Council

Effective Date: 1991

Date(s) of Revision: 1998; 2003; 4/2004; 11/2008; Aug 23, 2010; Mar 12, 2013; May 24, 2016

Responsible for Implementation: All Staff and Communications Division

Managed Care agencies: Within the contract for managed care agencies, it is written that media contacts on individual case situations will be handled by Franklin County Children Services. Information disclosure and media relations will be handled in the same manner as all other case situations, as outlined below.

Procedures:

- 1) This procedure applies to any staff person who:
 - a) Has information to give the media;
 - b) Is contacted by the media and asked to give information;
 - c) Is invited to appear before a group or be interviewed by the media as an official representative of the agency; or
 - d) Receives an expression of concern from a citizen who threatens to go to the media.
- 2) How to Report Information to the Media:
 - a) Non-supervisory and non-administrative staff involved should refer the matter to their immediate supervisor for disposition.
 - b) Any supervisor, manager or administrator having information to give the media (or having received such information from a supervisee) should contact the director of the Communications Division or the designee on duty and submit the information.

- c) Communications Division will handle dissemination of the information and will report back the outcome.
- 3) Steps to Follow When the Media Requests Information:
 - a) If the media request concerns a client complaint, the person receiving the call-including Communications Division and administrative staff-advises the media that information will be gathered and that information that is non-confidential material will be shared.
 - b) On all other media requests not related to client complaints, the supervisor, manager or administrator who is contacted for information by a media representative (or whose staff has such contact) should explain that the information requested will be collected and that the media representative will be called back as soon as possible the same day, by someone in the Communication Division.
 - c) Next, the supervisor, manager or administrator contacts the director of Communications Division or the designee on duty and discusses the request for information. The director of Communications Division or designee decides how to handle the request.
 - d) The director of Communications Division or designee consults with the Executive Director, and when appropriate, the General Counsel before disseminating case information to the media. General agency information related to services, budget and statistics is shared as available.
- 4) Disclosures to news media concerning specific families and children are subject to confidentiality guidelines, pursuant to Ohio Revised Code 2151.421 and 5153.17. The Executive Director authorizes the Communications Division staff to release information based on the following general guidelines when requested by the news media. Exceptions are made on a case-by-case basis with approval of the Executive Director or Assistant Director of Program and Placement Services pursuant to Ohio Administrative Code 5101:2-33-21.
 - a) Names and Ages: Communications Division staff can confirm names and ages when the reporter already has the approximate information from police, neighbors or others. When the reporter has no names or ages or only part of these facts, Communications Division staff does not release this information.
 - b) Past and Present Agency Involvement:

- i) When there is a past or current case, Communications Division can confirm whether there has been a court action and can acknowledge that services have been provided to the child and family. Past history will only be confirmed if a child is seriously injured or has died. If a child under agency care commits a serious offense or causes harm then current involvement or past history will be confirmed.
 - ii) Communications Division staff can acknowledge an open case and how long it's been open.
 - iii) Rather than disclose the nature of the involvement, Communications Division staff acknowledge only that Children Services is working with the family. However, a general description of how Children Services works with the families can be given. It can also be said that a family received a specific service such as counseling or homemaker service if the client alleges no service was received.
 - iv) If the case is closed, it can be confirmed that Children Services once had a case only if the current case involves serious injury or death.
- c) Location of Children: Communications Division staff can acknowledge the general location of children. For example, "the child is placed in foster care" or "the child is with other family," but they cannot disclose the specific family placement or address.
- d) Other Disclosures:
 - i) Any information recorded on police blotters, or court dates/court actions may be confirmed, since these are matter of public record. However, the media should be referred back to the appropriate law enforcement agencies for explanations.
 - ii) A specific family's problems, treatment or prognosis is not disclosed.
- 5) When client contact with the media is arranged through Franklin County Children Services and a person receiving services elects to speak to the media, the release form Media Release-Liability, form CS-CR-002, is signed discharging

Franklin County Children Services from liability and confirming that the client is aware of confidentiality policies and laws.

- 6) When a client threatens to go to the media with a complaint about the agency, any staff with knowledge that a client intends to go the media with a complaint should contact the director of Communications Division to alert administration to the possible media problem. If the media does call on the case, all media procedures will be followed and feedback will be provided to the employee or supervisor.