

Administrative Policy No. 2.07

Subject:	Office of Communications Policy
Information Contact:	Senior Director, Office of Communications MS 45100 (360) 902-8007
Authorizing Source:	Office of Communications, Services and Enterprise Support Administration
Effective Date:	April 1, 1989
Revised:	July 6, 2015
Approved By:	Original signed by Dana Phelps Senior Director, Policy & External Relations
Sunset Review Date:	July 6, 2019

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is:

- A. To ensure the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) engages in proactive and effective media relations, is visible in social media in a way that effectively identifies with the DSHS mission of Transforming Lives, and delivers understandable, professional, timely and responsible publications consistent with federal and state laws and Department rules, policies and procedures.
- B. To ensure the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) supports and delivers understandable, professional, timely and responsive media relations, publications and social media consistent with federal and state laws and Department rules, policies and procedures.
- C. To ensure DSHS employees understand and follow standards and standard procedures as established by the Office of Communications for media relations, publications and social media.
- D. To ensure Office of Communications staff have sufficient time and information to draft and seek input on and approval of news releases, statements, advisories, publications, social media and videos and to prepare designated staff to serve as agency, administration, division and/or program spokespersons as needed.

- E. To ensure that the look and feel of news releases, statements, advisories, publications and social media are consistent across the state, written in plain talk, and in alignment with the agency's mission, vision and goals.
- F. To establish and maintain editorial, design, technical and printing standards for DSHS publications.

Scope

This policy applies to:

All Department staff, in all administrations, divisions and programs that develop news releases, statements, advisories, publications, social media and videos for distribution to external audiences.

Definitions

- **DSHS Employees** are full- or part-time Department employees, not vendors, contractors or clients.
- **The Office of Communications**, for the purposes of this policy, consists of Media Relations and Visual Communications.
- **Media Relations** is responsible for dissemination of information about the Department and its administrations and programs to the news media, through social media and for facilitating media access to public events sponsored by the Department and its administrations.
- **Visual Communications** designs and produces, or collaborates on all DSHS visual communications for external audiences, maintaining and monitoring the quality of content, Department brand and design of those publications.
- **Design Standards** are principles of graphic design used to visually express and communicate information contained in DSHS visual communications and other informational material. Design standards include principles of effective communication such as page layout, color, font selection, illustrative techniques, page formatting, branding, technical printing requirements and language translation requirements.
- **DSHS Publications** are printed or electronic information intended principally for external distribution. Examples are the Department logo, brochures, posters, flyers, overall web design, displays, Power Point presentation formats, etc. The website policy may be found in DSHS Administrative Policy Chapter 15 – Information Systems – sections 18.1, 18.2 and 18.3. DSHS publications may be produced by any appropriate electronic means and reproduced as printed material by the Department of Enterprise Services Production Services, qualified outside printing vendors or other printing methods. DSHS publications also are produced in electronic formats for Internet printing or distribution.
- **Letters, forms and memoranda are not publications under this policy. Note:** DSHS Forms are not produced by Visual Communications. Contact [DSHS Forms and Records Management](#) at (360) 664-6048.

- **The DSHS Publications Library** is the list of available visual communications maintained by Visual Communications in the Office of Communications. **Standards** are practices adopted by the Office of Communications used to develop clear, concise and consistent written content for DSHS publications. Editorial standards include the DSHS [Style Guide](#), current principles of grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, reading level and plain talk as defined by [Executive Order](#) 05-03.
- **Printing Standards** are adopted by the Office of Communications and are compatible cost-effective techniques used to produce professional quality publications without compromising the design or content.
- **Technical Standards** are adopted by the Office of Communications based on the currently available professional method of electronic production of DSHS visual communications that allows Visual Communications to properly produce, update, catalog, store and translate DSHS visual communications and materials.
- **Social Media** is any web-based technology that enables and facilitates rapid communication and/or networking through the Internet and/or cellular networks for mobile devices. Examples include Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. The administrative policy on social media is No. 15.24.

Policy Requirements

- A. The Department will maintain a news media policy responsive to administrations, to clients and to the news media's needs and consistent with government laws, rules and procedures.
- B. The Department Secretary and Assistant Secretaries may designate an appropriate representative to speak to the media on their behalf.
- C. The DSHS Office of Communications will assign a Media Relations Manager to each administration. The Media Relations Manager will work with administrations to manage the administration's external and high-priority internal communications. Administrations may designate individuals as liaisons with the Office of Communications to ensure timely, accurate responses to media requests.
- D. The Office of Communications will work with the Secretary and high-level senior leadership to manage DSHS external and high-priority internal communications.
- E. Designated administration spokespersons will work with the administrations' Assistant Secretaries and/or designees and the administration's assigned Media Relations Manager within the Office of Communications to develop messaging, bullet points, statements, news releases, fact sheets and other products.
- F. Visual Communications designs, produces and edits all DSHS Publications for external audiences. Examples are the Department logo, brochures, posters, flyers, overall web design, displays, Power Point presentation formats, etc.

Process for Responding to Media Inquiries

Any DSHS employee contacted by the media will immediately, and before responding to any media request, notify his or her supervisor and the Office of Communications and provide information on the contact. The Office of Communications will contact the reporter.

The Media Relations Manager will notify the appropriate Assistant Secretary, the Secretary, the Assistant Secretary for the Services and Enterprise Support Administration, the Office of Communications Team and others as appropriate through a Media Inquiry message.

The Office of Communications will draft responses to the media and finalize with the Assistant Secretary or designee. Spokespersons or designated staff members named as contact people by the Office of Communications on news releases will be available to answer media requests.

Media Relations Managers will review any public disclosure materials related to their administrations before the materials are disseminated to a news organization.

Visual Communications

Visual Communications:

- Maintains and monitors the quality, both in content and design, of DSHS materials for external distribution and ensures DSHS complies with the provisions of chapter [40.07 RCW](#) to eliminate reports and publications that are economically or otherwise unjustified, and to simplify others. Visual Communications is responsible for developing and maintaining a consistent look and feel for DSHS publications, ensuring the use of the DSHS brand.
- Orders the translation of DSHS visual communications from English to other languages and ensures they meet the printing industry's current technical and font standards.
- Acts as the printing liaison with the Washington State Department of Enterprise Services Production and other outside printing vendors in accordance with RCW Chapter [43.78](#) requirements.
- Coordinates payments from customers for project costs.

DSHS programs must submit a completed [DSHS Communications Request Form](#) prior to production of a DSHS publication, except for publications using a prior-approved DSHS format.

Publications will comply with provisions of [Chapter 40.07 RCW](#) Management and Control of State Publications; and [Administrative Policy 7.21](#) Access to Services for Clients who are Limited English Proficient.

If Visual Communications cannot produce a DSHS visual communications project, it will:

1. Give, on a case-by-case basis, written approval to the requesting program to use an outside vendor.
2. Provide DSHS publication production guidelines for use by a contracted outside vendor.
3. Review, approve and catalog the final artwork prior to printing.
4. Take receipt of the final artwork and coordinate the printing or Web posting of the publication.
5. Retain publication artwork and related electronic files for future printings.

Visual Communications may provide an exception to the policy after reviewing the Visual Communications request form.