

LAC+USC MEDICAL CENTER POLICY

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Subject: MEDIA ACCESS	Original Issue Date: 6/1/89	Policy # 132
	Supersedes: 10/6/08	Effective Date: 2/11/14
Departments Consulted: Office of Public Affairs	Reviewed & Approved by: Attending Staff Association Executive Committee Senior Executive Council	Approved by: Chief Medical Officer
		Chief Executive Officer

PURPOSE

To establish a policy regarding access by the news media to LAC+USC Medical Center facilities, patients, and staff.

POLICY

The LAC+USC Medical Center facilities shall cooperate with the news media at all times to the extent possible, consistent with patient care and staff needs including safety, confidentiality, privacy, and applicable laws and regulations.

Release of patient information shall be consistent with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, 45 Code Federal Regulations, Parts 160 and 164 (HIPAA), all other applicable laws and regulations, case law, DHS and The Medical Center policies, the latest edition of the California Healthcare Association Consent Manual, and the news code of the Hospital Council of Southern California.

PROCEDURE

- Under the direction of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), the Medical Center Office of Public Affairs shall represent the LAC+USC Medical Center in all media matters. The Office of Public Affairs staff shall coordinate responses to media inquiries.
- Unauthorized patient information shall not be released to the media by any Medical Center employee, faculty member, or volunteer any at any time. News media shall not be given access to facilities, patients, visitors, or staff without authorization by the Office of Public Affairs.
- Phone inquiries by media to any clinical staff regarding general medical information not relating to either specific patients or to positions taken on specific programs or activities shall be immediately reported to the Office of Public Affairs.
- Unusual activities that may be of media interest shall be reported immediately, 24 hours a day, to the Office of Public Affairs staff member on-call.

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- Medical Center staff shall notify the Office of Public Affairs, immediately, should media appear anywhere in a Medical Center facility without authorization. Such notification shall also be made during evenings and/or weekends if media appear on Medical Center grounds for any reason.
- Cameras, video apparatus, or other similar equipment are prohibited inside the Medical Center for any reason without the authorization of the Office of Public Affairs. The individual with such unauthorized equipment shall be detained at the entrance and the Public Affairs Office will be notified for appropriate disposition.

Office of Public Affairs

- All media inquiries shall be referred to the Office of Public Affairs for appropriate disposition. Evenings and weekends, inquiries shall be directed to the Nursing Office, which shall refer such calls to the Office of Public Affairs staff member on-call or his or her designee.
- Media calls regarding patients on the Jail Service shall also be referred to the Office of Public Affairs for initial screening and referral to the appropriate bureau.
- The Office of Public Affairs shall keep the Department of Health Services Public Relations Office informed of important media inquiries, especially those that are unusual in nature.
- The Office of Public Affairs, under direction of the CEO, shall act as the liaison between the media (radio, television, newspapers, magazines, professional journals, motion pictures, freelance writers, producers, film/journalism students, etc.) and clinical staff and employees. The Office of Public Affairs shall cooperate with the USC Health Sciences Public Relations Office, whenever possible.
- The Office of Public Affairs, under direction of the CEO, shall have authority to authorize media or others (including staff) access to "VIP" or public figures, including release of patient information, interviews, photography, filming, and taping, consistent with other sections of this policy.
- All media requests to tour or observe patient care areas with or without cameras, videos, tape recorders, or other equipment shall be referred to the Office of Public Affairs.
- In the event of internal or external disasters or crises, the on-call Office of Public Affairs staff member shall be notified by the first responding office/personnel. In such a situation, the Office of Public Affairs shall designate a spokesperson who shall have sole authorization to respond to media inquiries and release of information with coordination by the Office of Public Affairs.

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Release of Patient Information

- HIPAA significantly restricts the information that previously could be disclosed to the public/media. Patients have the right to object to the release of any information to the public/media and must be advised of this right in accordance with the Medical Center Policy #216.1, "Privacy Practices Joint Notice Distribution."
- In general, information regarding patients held involuntarily in Psychiatric Services and/or HIV/AIDS patients may not be released.
- Before any information may be released to the public/media, the patient must be given the opportunity to agree or object to such disclosure. If the patient has not requested that information be withheld, the patient's condition may be described in the following one-word descriptions that do not reveal specific medical information about the individual: undetermined, good, fair, serious, critical.
- The patient's written authorization must be obtained before issuing a detailed statement (e.g., anything beyond the one-word condition descriptions noted above) regarding the nature of the patient's illness or injury, his or her treatment, and/or prognosis.

News Releases

All news/press releases regarding the Medical Center events, staff, activities, services, or patients shall emanate from the Office of Public Affairs. The Office shall cooperate with the various programs and services in issuing such releases or arranging press conferences, as appropriate.

Referral of Media to Other Agencies

The Office of Public Affairs, under direction of the CEO, shall have authorization to refer media to other applicable facilities or agencies, as necessary.

Filming/Taping/Still Photography/Interviews by Media

- All filming, taping, still photography, or interviews by media or others at Medical Center facilities shall be coordinated through the Office of Public Affairs.
- Filming, taping, still photography, or interviews by media or others shall be prohibited in all LAC+USC Medical Center emergency areas (except waiting areas), labor and delivery services, intensive care units, burn services, operating rooms, surgical and recovery services, psychiatric services, and the interior of the crematory building.
- The Office of Public Affairs' approval for filming, taping, still photography, or interviews by media or others within the non-prohibited areas of the Medical Center shall be in concert with the supervisory staff of the affected service/area. Media shall be escorted by Public Affairs,

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its designee, and/or Administration staff at all times. Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department staff shall accompany media upon request of the Office of Public Affairs.

- In accordance with HIPAA regulations, a written authorization from the patient (or parent/guardian, in the case of minors) shall be obtained prior to filming, taping, still photography, and/or interviews of patients. Once the written authorization is obtained, these activities will only be permitted when the physician-of-record determines that the patient's condition will not be jeopardized and after the patient (or parent/guardian, in the case of minors) gives written, witnessed, informed consent. Requests for filming, taping, and still photography shall be individually evaluated as to the safety, potential effect on delivery of patient care in the area, and privacy of patients, visitors, and staff.

RESPONSIBILITY

Chief Executive Officer
Administrators
Office of Public Affairs
Department Managers

REFERENCE

45 Code of Federal Regulations, Section 164.510(a)
California Healthcare Association Consent Manual
DHS Policy No.150, "Public Information"
DHS Policy No.361.2, "Notice of Privacy Practices"
DHS Policy No.361.7, "Right Of An Individual To Agree Or Object To The Use And Disclosure Of Protected Health Information"
Medical Center Policy #216.1, "Privacy Practices Joint Notice Distribution"
Medical Center Policy #203.2, "Protected Health Information: Right Of Individual To Agree Or Object To The Use And Disclosure Of

REVISION DATES

April 1, 1995; November 13, 1998; April 16, 2002; June 13, 2003; November 13, 2007; October 6, 2008; February 11, 2014