

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Subject: MEDIA ACCESS

Policy No.: A111

Supersedes: November 25, 2019

Review Date: April 10, 2023

Origin Date: January 1, 1982

Revision Date: April 10, 2023

PURPOSE:

To establish a policy regarding news media access to patients and staff of Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center (RLANRC), as well as the release of patient information.

POLICY:

- A. Rancho shall cooperate with print and news media to assist with reasonable information requests.

Fulfilling such requests is dependent upon non-interference with patient care, safety, and patient privacy rights.

- B. All news media personnel must have an escort at all times while on campus.

This policy also covers commercial filming, including but not limited to, production companies and student filmmakers.

- C. If media outlets fail to follow guidelines by respecting patient privacy rights, they will be subject to being escorted off the rounds by the campus Sheriff's Department.

PROCEDURE:

A. MEDIA ACCESS

1. The Office of Public & Media Relations will assist media outlets immediately upon inquiry. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is to be advised of all inquiries/requests from the media that relate to patients, staff, or programs of the medical center when the request/inquiry is made. The Department of Health Services (DHS) Public Information Office will be notified of all requests.

The Office of Public & Media Relations is typically aware of media outlets being onsite for coverage. However, staff should immediately notify hospital administration (or AOD) of the presence of unescorted media on campus.

2. Inquiries/requests received after 5:00 p.m., on weekends, or holidays are referred to the Administrative Nursing Director (AND) who will contact the Administrative Officer of the Day (AOD). The AOD will also notify the facility PIO and the CEO.
3. Hospital staff must direct all media inquiries to the Office of Public & Media Relations at extension 7602.

Request for information/interviews will be evaluated and coordinated by the Office of Public & Media Relations, hospital administration, and DHS Communications Team.

Revised: 12/09, 6/12, 2/16, 4/23

Reviewed: 12/09, 6/12, 2/16, 11/19, 4/23

Approved By:

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Under no circumstance should members of the media be granted access inside the facility without consent and presence from the Public Information Officer or authorized Administrator.

Staff are prohibited from speaking on behalf of Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center, a patient, or the Department of Health Service (DHS).

B. RELEASE OF PATIENT INFORMATION

1. A written request for the release of patient information will be required and must state specific information being requested. No information about a patient shall be given to the media unless a written consent to disclose patient information is obtained by Rancho staff. The consent shall be filed in the patient's medical record.
2. The media must correctly identify the patient by first and last name before the hospital can confirm the presence of the patient.
3. HIPAA regulations provide for the release of the following general information only, unless directed otherwise:
 - a. The patient is present in our hospital.
 - b. The generic diagnosis; i.e., stroke, rehabilitation.
 - c. General condition; i.e., medically stable, participating in rehabilitation.

DIRECTED OTHERWISE MEANS:

- d. We are not to give out any information.
- e. We are only to give out information to patient/or surrogate-approved individuals.
- f. Patient is under an Alias/AKA. No information is to be provided.

If the inquiring party cannot properly identify the patient by their registered name, our response is, "I'm sorry we have no one by that name in our hospital."

C. MEDIA COVERAGE FOR PUBLIC FIGURES/VIP PATIENTS

RLANRC will cooperate with news media requests for information involving a "public figure" or VIP. The CEO or the designee shall serve as the spokesperson for disseminating information. Press conferences may be scheduled as needed if approved by family and physician.

D. INTERVIEWS

Administration will arrange interviews at the mutual convenience of the requesting news agency and RLANRC. In instances where more than one interview is requested with the same patient or staff member, arrangements for a press conference may be made. The following guidelines will be followed as closely as possible.

1. A designated time will be agreed upon prior to interview, including length of time allowed for interview. Acceptable areas of discussion may also be prearranged.
2. Interviews with patients are permitted only when the physician of record agrees that the patient's condition will not be jeopardized, when Administration concurs, and the patient (parent/guardian) gives written, informed consent.
3. Interviews will be terminated at the time agreed upon or when nursing or medical staff or the patient him/herself, determine that the interview should not continue.

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4. Interviews will be scheduled between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday at a mutually convenient time.

E. REQUEST TO TOUR

Requests for tours to facilitate research for news or feature stories will be arranged by the Rancho PIO with the approval of the CEO. Requests may be received in writing, e-mail, letter, or by telephone. Administration representatives will accompany the requestor during the tour. Tours will be arranged at mutually convenient times to avoid disruption of patient care functions.

F. PRESS RELEASES

The Administration Office will be responsible for the preparation of press releases. The approval of the CEO or his/her designee will be obtained prior to distribution. The DHS Public Information Officer shall approve press releases with County-wide impact or interest. Press releases of local area interests/concerns will be distributed by RLANRC Administration Office with notification of the DHS Public Information Officer and the CEO.

G. PHOTOGRAPHY/FILMING AND TAPING

1. The photographing, filming, or taping of patients shall be considered in the same context as confidentiality of records. Every effort will be made to protect the patients from being photographed, filmed, or taped without their knowledge or against their will. Employees can voluntarily decide if they wish to be photographed or filmed however; a photo consent form must be signed by all who consent to being photographed and/or filmed.
2. Photographing, filming, or taping of patients will be allowed when consent forms have been completed and the treating physician concurs that the patient's condition will not be jeopardized. Other patients or surrounding areas shall not be photographed, filmed, or taped without the expressed permission of the CEO. See Policy B501, Photographing of Patients and County Facilities.

H. FIRE/DISASTER

In the event of a major County-wide disaster, all requests for news releases and requests for information by the news media will be referred to the DHS Public Information Officer. The CEO, in conjunction with the DHS Public Information Officer, will be the spokesperson for such requests. Local or minor disaster information will be released through the CEO's office. The Rancho PIO will be responsible for notifying DHS Public Information Office.

REFERENCE:

Department of Health Services, Policy 304
RLANRC Fire/Disaster/Safety Manual