



POLICE DEPARTMENT  
MEDIA  
COMMUNICATIONS

ADMINISTRATIVE  
PROCEDURE #221

Responsible Executive:  
Chief of Police  
Responsible Office:  
Vice President for Public Safety  
Approved by:  
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## Policy Statement

The Johns Hopkins Police Department (JHPD) is committed to transparency and informing the community and the news media of events handled by and involving the JHPD in a timely manner. Official public statements, comments, and/or statistical data about criminal cases or the operation of the JHPD shall be made by the Johns Hopkins Vice President of Public Safety or their designee, the Chief of Police, and/or the Public Information Officer (PIO). Public information requests from the media shall be directed to and will be handled by the JHPD’s PIO in accordance with this Directive.

## Who Is Governed by This Policy?

All personnel, including sworn, nonsworn, and contractual or voluntary persons in service with the JHPD, are governed by this Directive.

## Purpose

This Directive is intended to establish uniform procedures that foster a cooperative working relationship with members of the news media and to ensure the flow of information to the community, JHPD members, and the news media.

## Definitions

<b>Emergency Notification:</b>	For purposes of this Directive, notification provided for any significant crisis, emergency, or hazardous or dangerous situation, including a Clery Act crime that is currently occurring on or imminently threatening the Johns Hopkins campus.
<b>Member:</b>	All members of the JHPD, including employees, officers, and volunteers, unless the term is otherwise qualified (e.g., member of the public, member of the Baltimore Police Department, etc.).
<b>News Media:</b>	For purposes of this Directive, journalists, reporters, and every other form that communicates current events and analysis to people.
<b>Officer:</b>	All sworn police officers, at any rank, as defined by MD Code, Public Safety, § 3-201, in service with the JHPD.
<b>Social Media:</b>	Forms of electronic communication, such as websites for social networking and microblogging, through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, photos, videos, and other content.

## Policy

When it comes to interacting with the media about JHPD matters, the directives and responsibilities of JHPD members are viewed in terms of *authorization* and *notification*. Unless explicitly authorized, JHPD members must not communicate with the media on behalf of the JHPD or regarding JHPD matters. All JHPD members must know and adhere to this Directive and understand the framework of the JHPD's media communications, the guidelines regarding who is authorized to communicate with the media on behalf of the JHPD, and the rules and restrictions on public disclosure for records requests as explained in JHPD Directive #210, Records Management.

## Procedures

### I. General Duties of the PIO

The Director of Strategic Communications is designated by the Vice President for Public Safety to serve as the PIO for the JHPD, and to coordinate public information activities with public information representatives from other Johns Hopkins entities and partner organizations during any mutual effort. During an absence of the Director of Strategic Communications or other related circumstances described in this Directive, an interim PIO or spokesperson may be designated by the Chief of Police or the Vice President for Public Safety.

- A. The PIO is responsible for promoting transparency and keeping the community informed and can be contacted at any time by cell phone, email,

or via the Johns Hopkins Public Safety (JHPS) website under [Requests for Information](#). The general duties of the PIO include the following:

- Handling requests from media outlets regarding interviews and routine news stories, and at the scenes of incidents. (Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) 54.1.1.a)
- Preparing and distributing JHPD news/press releases and responses. (CALEA 54.1.1.b)
- Coordinating news conferences. (CALEA 54.1.1.c)
- Coordinating the appropriate release of information about victims, witnesses, and suspects when necessary. (CALEA 54.1.1.d)
- Coordinating the appropriate release of information concerning JHPD investigations and operations when necessary. (CALEA 54.1.1.e)
- Coordinating with other agencies involved in critical incidents as directed by the Chief of Police. (CALEA 54.1.1.f)
- Assisting in crisis management within the JHPD.
- Releasing other information deemed appropriate by the Vice President of Public Safety, the Chief of Police, or their designees.
- Coordinating any information release of any incident other than a critical incident that has generated or is generating significant public interest.
- Designing, recommending, and executing media strategies using print, broadcast, internet, and social media platforms.
- Producing briefing products for JHPD executives.
- Producing talking points, questions and answers, and other materials to help guide JHPD members in their interactions with the media and community.
- Engaging with internal and external partners/stakeholders routinely and fully participating in interagency meetings.

**B.** The on-duty supervisor will ensure that the PIO is immediately notified of the following incidents involving the JHPD: (CALEA 46.1.3.c, g)

- Any criminal incident resulting in death or serious injuries.
- Any shooting incident involving a member of the JHPD.
- Any incident involving hostages or a barricaded suspect.
- Any incident involving serious injury to a member of the JHPD, or serious injury to another person or property that may have been caused by a member of the JHPD.

- Any incident resulting in a mass arrest or unusual police commitment or activity.
  - Any incident or event requiring an emergency notification or timely warning in conformance with [Campus Notifications \(GOV036\)](#) and/or a JHPS campus-specific Standard Operating Procedure. (CALEA 91.1.5.b)
  - Any other incident that is receiving unusual media attention or likely to arouse an unusual level of public attention (media personnel at scene, repeated inquiries, etc.).
  - Any contact by or with a member of the media or any persons believed to be members of the media about JHPD matters, even if the contact was unplanned or unintentional.
  - This does not include inquiries by complainants and/or respondents about administrative investigations in which they are involved, which should be routed to the Public Safety Accountability Unit (PSAU).
- C. The PIO will as soon as possible, but not later than the close of business, inform the Chief of Police of those incidents where there may be a question as to the JHPD's liability or those which may result in heightened community interest. (CALEA 11.3.3)
- D. Administrative investigations by the PSAU and other personnel matters are considered confidential, and **all** inquiries regarding such investigations shall be referred to the PIO and PSAU. (CALEA 54.1.1.e)
- E. Authorized members of the JHPD will notify the PIO in advance of any contacts with the media on JHPD matters.

## II. **Communications at the Scene of an Incident** (CALEA 54.1.1.a)

Members of the JHPD will extend every courtesy to accredited media personnel at the scene of a police incident and will accord appropriate privileges to local, national, and international news media representatives, including photographers displaying appropriate press credentials.

- A. The on-duty supervisor (or patrol officer if a supervisor is not available) shall share all necessary information with the PIO when at the scene of an incident or other event that is developing quickly.
- B. Once briefed, the PIO shall coordinate with the Vice President for Public Safety or Chief of Police to provide specific information to be released.
- C. The Incident Commander, with input from the PIO, shall identify a location where news media can be staged, close enough to observe the scene, but where such access would not interfere with law enforcement

operations. News media who decide to set up or remain somewhere other than a designated staging area may do so without JHPD interaction provided they are in a place the public has a right to be. (CALEA 54.1.3)

- D.** The supervisor in charge of any ongoing incident or investigation shall determine the scope of the scene and shall post officers and/or mark the area to prevent intrusion or contamination.
- All persons, including media personnel, have the right to be in a public place provided they do not intrude upon an area being controlled as a scene. All persons, including media personnel, have the right to possess and use any recording device.
  - Officers shall not direct media personnel to leave any area that is open to the public or any person to not record or stop recording any activity while that person is in an area open to the public.
    - Officers shall not interfere with such a recording or seize the recording device from a member of the public or media personnel. See JHPD Directive #110, Observation & Recording of Police Services.
  - Officers and other members of the JHPD should respectfully direct members of the news media and other people to the PIO for public statements about operations or incidents on campus or involving the JHPD unless they have been designated the spokesperson for the incident or event.
  - Officers will neither encourage nor prevent the photographing of defendants in public places.
    - Under no circumstances will persons in JHPD custody be posed for photographers.
  - Persons in custody shall not be interviewed by the news media, nor will members of the JHPD be interviewed while a person in JHPD custody is present.

### **III. Restricted Information**

Information the PIO should exclude from news releases and/or keep confidential during interview or media inquiries shall include the following:

- A.** The home addresses or telephone numbers of JHPD members.
- B.** Personnel issues involving other members of the JHPD or any Johns Hopkins employee.
- C.** The contents of any incident report where a youth is either a victim or a suspect, which is specifically prohibited by law unless a court order directs otherwise.

- D.** Investigative information that **shall not** be released includes the following:
- The identity of the victim of a child abuse, rape, or any sex crime, or related information that, if divulged, might lead to the victim’s identification.
    - In these cases, only the age, sex, and city/town of residence may be released.
  - The identity of any youth who is a suspect or defendant in an incident over which the Juvenile Court has jurisdiction.
  - The identity of a victim or witness if such disclosure would significantly prejudice an investigation.
  - When an arrest warrant exists, information regarding the specific identity or location of a person suspected of a crime **shall not** be released until after service or attempts to serve have been exhausted.
  - The identity of a person of interest or person suspected of committing, but not charged, with a crime.
  - The results of investigative procedures (lineups, polygraphs, fingerprinting, etc.). The fact that such procedures have been or will be performed may be acknowledged.
  - The contents of any suicide note.
  - Unverified information, or specifics of “MO” details known only to someone involved in a crime.
  - Specific dollar amounts of cash or property involved, excepting an indication of whether the amount is over or under \$500.
  - The name of any person(s) seriously injured or killed in an incident investigated by the JHPD will be withheld until positive identification is made and next of kin notified.
    - No information relating to a specific cause of death will be released until the Office of the State Medical Examiner has made a determination.
- E.** Confidential intelligence information will not be disclosed without the express permission of a supervisor with authority over the incident or investigation in question. (CALEA 54.1.1.e)
- F.** The pretrial disclosure of the following information may jeopardize a defendant’s right to a fair trial and will not be released:
- Observations about the character of a person in custody.
  - Statements, admissions, confessions, or alibis attributable to a person in custody.

- The refusal or failure of a person in custody to make a statement or to participate in or allow investigative procedures such as polygraph examinations, etc.
  - Statements concerning the credibility, character, or testimony of a victim or prospective witnesses.
  - Any opinion as to a person's guilt, or the possibility of a guilty plea to the offense charged.
  - Statements concerning evidence or arguments in the case, or whether it is anticipated that such evidence or argument will be used at trial.
  - Arrest photographs or other images of a person in custody (until after conviction unless a valid law enforcement function is served).
  - Criminal History Record Information (pursuant to MD Criminal Justice Information System policy, rules, and procedures).
- G.** Any information that could impede the ongoing criminal investigation or prosecution.
- H.** Personal opinions from JHPD members on any aspect of an investigation, or on any agency matters during conversations that are on or off the record with members of the news media.

#### **IV. Multiple Agency Incident** (CALEA 54.1.1.f)

The JHPD is sometimes involved jointly with other Johns Hopkins entities, governmental organizations, and public safety agencies in newsworthy incidents where the JHPD does not have primary jurisdiction. In those cases, the primary public information function will not be provided by the JHPD, and all media requests will be referred to the agency having primary responsibility.

#### **V. Feature Articles, Presentations & Social Media**

Requests for JHPD participation in feature articles and presentations, to include the photographing of police facilities, will be facilitated by the PIO and limited to the scope of approval obtained from the Vice President for Public Safety or Chief of Police.

- A.** If circumstances arise where the use of Crime Stoppers, Most Wanted, or other media communications is appropriate, the assigned JHPD personnel will work with the PIO regarding messaging.
- Final messaging will be approved by the Vice President for Public Safety, Chief of Police, or their designee before release.
- B. Social Media Outreach:** The PIO coordinates the use of JHPD official social media accounts and website to inform the Johns Hopkins community about agency activities, campus safety concerns and tips, JHPD programs, including at the Police Athletic Activities League center, and other agency functions. (CALEA 54.1.1.g)

- Social media pages associated with the JHPD will only be used by the PIO to convey agency news and community information and will not contain any personal views or opinions of the authors.
- The PIO may use JHPD social media to communicate critical information to the public in real time and to coordinate staging areas for critical incidents with media partners. (CALEA 91.1.5)

## VI. Media Feedback

Periodically, the PIO will meet with members of the local media to obtain feedback on this Directive. (CALEA 54.1.2)

## VII. Training

The PIO shall receive introductory and ongoing training regarding the appropriate release of law enforcement information to the public and media. (CALEA 54.1.4)

## Policy Enforcement

<b>Enforcement</b>	JHPD managers and supervisors are responsible for enforcing this Directive.
<b>Reporting Violations</b>	Suspected violations of this Directive should be reported to the Chief of Police.

## Related Resources

<b>University Policies and Documents</b>
Conduct & Responsibility #110, Observation & Recording of Police Services Administrative Procedure #210, Records Management <a href="#">Campus Notifications (GOV036)</a>
<b>External Documentation</b>
<b>Police Department Forms and Systems</b>

## Contacts

Subject Matter	Office Name	Telephone Number	Email/Web Address
Policy Clarification and Interpretation	Policy Management	(667)306-8618	<a href="mailto:jhpdpolicyinquiry@jh.edu">jhpdpolicyinquiry@jh.edu</a>