



Media Communications Policy

The purpose of this policy is to clarify and improve procedures for communicating information to the public and stakeholders through the news media about the issues, decisions, actions and programs concerning the Sonoma Valley Health Care District (the District) and the Sonoma Valley Hospital (the Hospital). This policy applies to all media-based public communications.

- Local, regional and national news and feature media, both print and electronic
- Industry news media and websites
- SVH/Board website
- Social media (i.e. Facebook, Twitter)

Policy

It is the policy of the District and the Hospital to provide accurate and timely information to the media on a regular basis in order to foster and maintain open communications and to provide transparency for the media and the public. This information shall include, but not be limited to, decisions, policies, operating results, quality ratings, and Hospital programs and service offerings.

The District and Hospital shall be accessible to the media and public and shall respond to inquiries relevant to its mission, policies and decisions in a timely manner, but with the understanding that the District/Hospital may require time to gather information before responding.

In instances where a discussion of an issue is in the public interest, the Chair shall place the issue on the agenda for the next regularly scheduled Board meeting or at a special Board meeting called to discuss the issue.

District and Hospital communications will not disclose patient information in compliance with HIPAA guidelines.

Responsibilities

The District Chief Executive Officer (CEO) shall be responsible for ensuring that all District/Hospital communications are in compliance with the Media Communications Policy.

The Board Chair shall be responsible for identifying and approving all media announcements relating to Board decisions and actions.

Procedures

The CEO shall develop and present to the District Board an annual communications plan encompassing both public information and marketing communications strategies and initiatives.

The CEO shall plan and implement public communications initiatives that enhance media and public understanding of the District and Hospital and the role each plays in serving the health and wellbeing of the community.

The CEO shall coordinate with the Board Chair the dissemination to the media of Board announcements, decisions and initiatives.

The CEO shall ensure that information on the Hospital's website and Facebook page is regularly updated.

The CEO shall maintain a current list of local/regional media and key contacts, with information on deadline requirements, for dissemination of District/Hospital news.

The CEO shall develop and maintain an online media communications program through social media to reach members of the public who cannot be reached through print media.

District Board members contacted by media outlet for comments should confer with the Board Chair prior to responding to ensure accuracy of information.

Hospital employees shall not make statements to media or through media on behalf of the Hospital and/or Board without authorization from the CEO or the Board Chair.

Exceptions to Policy

The CEO will obtain approval from the Board Chair prior to releasing information to the media in matters dealing with issues of community and political sensitivity regarding District and/or Hospital policy or operations.

In the event of an activation of the Hospital's Emergency Operations Plan (EOP,) the sole spokesperson for the District and the Hospital shall be the designated Public Information

Officer. No other Hospital employee or District Board member shall make any comments or communications to any media outlet during the time the EOP is in effect.