



## **NORTH MIAMI POLICE DEPARTMENT**

### **STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES**



### **MEDIA RELATIONS 400.04**

EFFECTIVE DATE: 03-30-21

APPROVED:   
Chief of Police

SUPERSEDES: 08-26-19

CFA: 1.06, 1.07

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### **I. PURPOSE**

To establish procedures to ensure that consistent, timely and appropriate information is made available to media representatives without partiality and within legal guidelines.

### **II. POLICY**

To assist inquiring media representatives when gathering information relating to incidents of interest to the public, whenever possible, in accordance with Departmental procedures and Florida law, to include FSS Chapter 39 and 119. In addition, to seek the public's assistance, through the help of the media, with investigative inquiries and general announcements to the public.

Department personnel should expect that media representatives will be present at scenes and other events, making inquiries and reporting incidents. Mutual cooperation and understanding will provide for a positive interaction to achieve the missions of both, the media and the Department.

### III. SCOPE

This policy applies to all members of the Department.

### IV. DEFINITIONS

- A. Media - Encompasses any form of mass media with focus on delivering news to the general public, or a target public, to include print media (newspapers, newsmagazines), broadcast news (radio and television), and the Internet (online newspapers, news blogs, news videos, live news streaming, etc.).
- B. Media Release - Information provided to the media, whether investigative in nature or not, that is coordinated through a Public Information Officer (PIO) and the appropriate Section supervisor with approval by the Chief of Police, or his/her designee. Media releases pertaining to shared events with the City will be coordinated by the NMPD PIO, along with the City's PIO. Media releases may be a prepared document, oral communication, or email.
- C. Public Information Officers (PIO) - Officers assigned and authorized to make contact with the media to release information on specific incidents and/or events. **CFA 1.06A**
- D. Language Clarification:
  - Should: Indicates a general or expected action, absent a rational basis for failing to conform.
  - Shall or Will: Indicates a mandatory action.

### V. MEMBERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. PIOs are selected by the Chief of Police and will be under the direction of the PIO Commander with oversight by the Special Services Major
- B. Media relations, and the release of Departmental information to the media, be it in verbal or written form, will be coordinated in a timely manner through authorized PIOs only, and will be made without partiality.
- C. Any member in receipt of an inquiry from the media, be it in person at a

scene, via telephone, or in written form, will courteously advised the media representative to contact the agency's PIO. In addition, the member shall forward the inquiry to the PIO Commander for follow-up.

- D. PIOs will prepare media releases as needed by occurrence, or when necessary to inform the community of developments within our Department.
- E. PIO responsibilities include the following:
  - 1. Work as a liaison with other departments in developing procedures for releasing information when involved in multi-jurisdictional events that require mutual effort. **CFA 1.07I**
  - 2. Coordinate responses to media inquiries and notify the Chief of Police via the PIO Detail chain of command.
  - 3. Assist media representatives covering news stories, including at the scene of an incident(s). **CFA 1.06B**
  - 4. Be on-call to respond to media requests.
  - 5. Prepare and distribute agency media releases in a timely manner.
    - a. Media release requests will be forwarded to the PIO Commander for submission to the Chief of Police, or his/her designee, for approval. Once approved, the PIO Commander will arrange for the same to be forwarded to all media contacts.
  - 6. Arrange and assist at media news conferences. **CFA 1.06E**
  - 7. Coordinate, if authorized, the release of information about victims, witnesses, and suspects within legal guidelines, i.e., FSS Chapter 39 (Juveniles) and 119.
  - 8. With approval, preparing and posting general information concerning police activity and events utilizing the Department's social media accounts of Facebook, Instagram, and Ring. **CFA 1.06D**
  - 9. Work with the City's PIO on media releases and special marketing, as needed.
  - 10. Facilitate media responses for emergency situations and developing incidents. **CFA 1.06D**

11. Maintain current media contact information.
12. Verify media credentials when making contact with new media representatives.
13. Seek assistance from the media when attempting to stimulate public interest in Departmental programs or events involving the community.

## **VI. MAJOR CRIME SCENES OR EVENTS**

- A. It shall be the responsibility of the PIO to act as liaison at all major crime scenes or events (homicides, disturbances, demonstrations, etc.) and assist the media seeking to cover the news story as follows: **CFA 1.06B**
  1. The shift supervisor on the scene will designate a media area after police lines have been established.
  2. The PIO on the scene will meet with the incident commander and/or the appropriate investigator to determine what information may be released. The release of information about victims, witnesses, and suspects on active investigations will be based on the investigative necessity and whether the information is not exempt from disclosure by law. **CFA 1.06F**
  3. Photography by the media within the immediate scene/event areas will be restricted as follows: **CFA 1.06B**
    - a. With approval of the on-scene supervisor or lead investigator, media representatives may photograph from areas that will not contaminate the scene, hinder the successful conclusion of a confidential investigation, threaten the public order, jeopardize the identity of any undercover personnel, or conflict with established police procedures. **CFA 1.06B**
    - b. Members of the Police Department shall not stage “perp walks” for the media.
    - c. The Chief of Police or Assistant Chiefs may grant access to restricted areas within the Police Department for the purpose of filming.

## VII. PIO NOTIFICATION and PROCEDURES

- A. Supervisors will notify the PIO Commander, whether there is any media on scene or not, when the following occurs:
  - 1. Any major crime or crash involving significant injuries.
  - 2. Major emergency scenes where it is anticipated that media coverage is likely to occur.
  - 3. Significant events of a sensitive nature where public interest and media interest is anticipated, such as serious injuries to others due to police action.
- B. Media news conferences will be conducted at the discretion of the Chief of Police, or his/her designee.
- C. In the event that a PIO is needed after normal duty hours, the concerned supervisor will contact the PIO Commander who will either address the request, or will assign the same to a PIO Team member on-call for follow-up pursuant to this policy. **CFA 1.06C**
- D. In preparation for any media release, the assigned PIO will meet with the lead investigator and/or the Section supervisor to obtain the relevant information related to the incident. Once approved for release by the Chief of Police, or his/her designee, the PIO will distribute the media release to all media contacts.
  - 1. Unless the release of this information could compromise the safety of persons, the security of the event, the rights of persons (victims, witnesses or suspects) or may hinder the investigation or potential for prosecution, information that PIOs may release includes:
    - a. Type or nature of incident.
    - b. The location, date and time, injuries sustained, damages, and a description of how the incident occurred.
    - c. Personal information identifying the victim(s), provided it is not exempt from FSS Chapter 39 and 119. In addition:  
**CFA 1.07G**
      - 1.) PIOs shall confirm with the Records Unit, prior to the release of any identifying victim(s) information, that the victim(s) has not requested that their personal information not be disclosed pursuant to their

constitutional right (Marsy's Law). For further, see the Miami-Dade Police Department's Legal Note, No. 19-02, "Victim's Rights - Marsy's Law" available in PowerDMS.

- d. Description of suspects.
- e. Weapons and vehicles used.
- f. The name, age, address, and photograph of adults charged with a crime. **CFA 1.07B**
- g. Injuries suffered by victims or suspects.
- h. Name, photograph, and address of a juvenile taken into custody for, or charged with a felony (confirmed). **CFA 1.07H**
  - PIOs must be cognizant of the legal mandates relating to the confidentiality of juvenile records and will consult with the NMPD Records Custodian and/or Juvenile Court for guidance when in doubt prior to releasing any information.
- i. Amount of money or type of property taken, not exempt from disclosure as a public record pursuant to FSS Chapter 119.
- j. Requests for assistance in locating evidence, witnesses, complainants, or suspects.
- k. Upon request, the number of officers involved in an event or investigation, and length of the investigation.
- l. Upon request, the name of the investigator in charge of a case, the supervisor and unit assignment with the exception of investigative techniques, names and photos of undercover officers.
- m. Upon request, information received from other law enforcement agencies with their explicit approval to release that information. **CFA 1.07I**
- n. Upon request, the Chief of Police, or his/her designee, and the PIO, will coordinate the release of statistics and information concerning confidential agency investigations, provided such material is no longer active and is not exempt by law from public record. **CFA 1.06G**

2. Information that may not be released:
  - a. Any criminal intelligence or criminal investigative information, active or not, including the photograph, name, address, or other information that would reveal the identity of a person who is the victim of any sexual offense (including children), child abuse, a person under the age of 18 who is the victim of human trafficking, and any other victim exempt pursuant to public records laws. **CFA 1.07H**
  - b. The identity of any critically injured or deceased person prior to the notification of the next of kin. When notification has been attempted but is not possible within a reasonable time, the respective Section Major may make an exception. **CFA 1.07G**
    - 1.) The specific cause or details that lead to the incident may be withheld, if it could hinder the criminal investigation.
  - c. The identity or location of a suspect who has not yet been arrested. The existence of a suspect may be acknowledged without comment. In limited circumstances, the photograph and identity of a suspect who is accused and is being sought, but has not yet been arrested, may be released in order to obtain the assistance of the public in locating and apprehending the suspect. **CFA 1.07B**
  - d. The performance or results of an investigative procedure or test, such as a lineup, CVSA, fingerprinting, laboratory analysis, ballistics test, etc., unless the release of said information is approved by the Chief of Police. **CFA 1.07D**
  - e. Information that, if prematurely released, could significantly interfere with an investigation or arrest, particularly details known only to a suspect or an officer, specifics of modus operandi, unverified information, unchecked leads, and information that may cause a suspect to flee or avoid apprehension.
  - f. The existence of any confession, admission of guilt, or statements or refusal of statements made by the accused, unless authorized by the Chief of Police. **CFA 1.07C**
  - g. The identity, testimony, or any comments on the character or credibility of prospective witness. **CFA 1.07E**

h. Any opinion or comment about the prior criminal record, character, reputation, or guilt or innocence of the accused, or the merits of the case, including the quality and nature of evidence, and whether its use in court is expected.

**CFA 1.07A,F**

i. The home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and photographs of active or former sworn or civilian Department member; as well as the names, home addresses, telephone numbers, photographs, dates of birth, and places of employment of the spouses and children of such personnel; and the names and locations of schools and day care facilities attended by the children of such personnel. If the active or former member is charged with a crime, his or her booking photograph may be released; however, PIOs will confer with the Records Custodian for the current legal mandates prior to release. **CFA 1.07J**

j. The identity of confidential informants or contents of any information provided.

k. Specific causes of death prior to the Medical Examiner's evaluation and with approval of the Investigative Commander.

E. When in doubt, PIOs will seek the assistance of the Records Custodian for guidance when coordinating the release of information to ensure it conforms with public records laws.