



Title:	Press Policy	ID:	20506
Keywords	press, media, news, newspaper, reporter		

I. Purpose of Policy

To facilitate the process of interacting with journalists, members of the press, photographers, and the news media, while protecting patient confidentiality and minimizing disruption to patient care.

II. Definitions

N/A

III. Policy Statement

The External Affairs department at Alice Peck Day Memorial Hospital (APD) will assist journalists by providing information, arranging interviews, and accommodating other request in a timely manner. APD has experts who are available to speak about medical topics and health issues.

IV. Procedure

Permission to interview anyone on the APD campus must first be arranged with the External Affairs office. During regular business hours (8:00 a.m. to 5 p.m.), please call the External Affairs office at (603) 308-0822. If your request is needed after these hours, please call the switchboard at 603-448-3121 and ask for the Administrator-On-Call. APD employees should not respond directly to any reporter's questions, give out information, or talk with a reporter "off the record" or "on background." Please be polite and helpful, and refer all requests for interviews or information to the External Affairs department.

- Please contact the Vice President of External Affairs (Peter Glenshaw; 603-308-0820; glenshawp@apdmh.org) or the Marketing and Communications Manager (Kelli Pippin; 603-308-0822; pippink@apdmh.org) in advance to obtain clearances to come onto the hospital campus to arrange photography or an interview.
- All photographers, whether using broadcast or still photography, must be accompanied by an External Affairs staff member while on the hospital campus. Photographers may film from public sidewalks or streets without an External Relations staff member.

- An APD Image and Authorization Release form must be signed before reporters or photographers can interview or photograph patients or providers.
- Our staff follows the American Hospital Association's suggestions in meeting patient privacy guidelines contained in the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). See our Patient Information and Media Inquiry Policy for more information.
- **Condition and Location of Patients**
Information about the condition and location of an inpatient, outpatient or emergency department patient may be released only if the inquiry specifically contains the patient's name and if the patient has not opted out of the hospital census. No information is to be given if a request does not include a specific patient's name. APD may release the patient's one-word condition and location without obtaining prior patient authorization--as long as the patient has not opted out of the hospital directory (asking that it not be released.)

Condition

The following one-word conditions are the only condition reports approved for release:

UNDETERMINED – Patient awaiting physician and/or assessment.

GOOD - Vital signs are stable and within normal limits. Patient is conscious and comfortable. Indicators are excellent.

FAIR - Vital signs are stable and within normal limits. Patient is conscious but may be uncomfortable. Indicators are favorable.

SERIOUS. Vital signs may be unstable and not within normal limits. Patient is acutely ill. Indicators are questionable.

CRITICAL - Vital signs are unstable and not within normal limits. Patients may be unconscious. Indicators are unfavorable.

Note: The term "stable" should not be used as a condition or in combination with other conditions.

DEATH - The death of a patient may be reported to the authorities by the hospital if the decedent's next of-kin have been notified and if the patient's legal representative gives authorization. Information about the cause of death must come from the patient's physician, not the hospital's representative. The hospital cannot share information with the media about cause of death, even sudden, violent or accidental deaths that may have been reported by law enforcement officials. It is the responsibility of the department of External Affairs to confirm that the patient's next-of-kin has been notified before releasing information that a patient has died.

TREATED AND RELEASED – Patient received treatment but was not admitted.

TREATED AND TRANSFERRED – Patient received treatment; was transferred to a different facility. (Although we may disclose that a patient was treated and released, we cannot release information regarding the date of release or where the patient went upon release unless authorized to do so by the patient.)

Location

To safeguard the privacy of patients, the disclosure of a patient's location may not be made to the media without patient permission.

When a Patient Cannot Express a Preference

In some cases, patients will not have had the opportunity to state a preference about having their information released. In this case, condition and location information should only be released if, in the hospital's professional judgment, releasing such information would be in the patient's best interest. When the patient recovers sufficiently, the hospital must ask about information preferences.

In Disaster Situations

Information may be released to other hospitals, healthcare facilities and relief agencies in situations where multiple facilities are receiving patients from one disaster. General information may also be released to help dispel public anxiety. For example, we may report, "our facility is treating four individuals as a result of the explosion." We may also state the number of patients brought to our facility by gender or by age. To safeguard the privacy of patients, the disclosure of a patient's location may not be made to the media without patient permission.

Matters of Public Record or Public Figures

Matters of public record refer to situations that are reportable by law to public authorities, such as law enforcement agencies, the coroner or public health officers. While laws and/or regulations require healthcare facilities to report a variety of information to public authorities, it is not the responsibility of facilities to provide that information in response to calls or other inquiries from the media or other parties, including law enforcement officials. Instead, calls regarding matters of public record should be directed to the appropriate public authority.

Patient Involved in Matters of Public Record

Patients who are involved in matters of public record have the same privacy rights as all other patients as far as the hospital is concerned. If a call is received regarding a patient involved in a matter of public record, the media must know the patient's name at the time of the call. The hospital will release the appropriate one-word condition, provided the patient has not opted out of the hospital directory.

Celebrities/Public Figures

Celebrities, public figures and public officials have the same privacy rights as all other patients as far as the hospital is concerned. If a call is received regarding a celebrity, public figure or public official, information may be released only with the permission of the patient or legal authority. It must follow the one-word condition format unless the patient wishes to have other information released.

Patients may “opt out” of providing information to anyone.

Patients are informed when admitted as to information that will be included in the hospital directory. The patient may state that he or she does not want any information released, including confirmation of his/her presence in the facility.

Information may not be released if it could embarrass or endanger patients

Absolutely no information--even a confirmation of a patient's being at a facility-- may be released in the case of patients being treated for alcohol or substance abuse. If knowledge of a patient's location could potentially endanger the patient (i.e. abusive partner, stalker, etc.), no information of any kind may be given out, including confirmation of the patient's presence at APD.

Circumstances of Accident, Incident or Injury

No information may be given out regarding the circumstances of accident, incident or injury.

Prognosis

Statements about prospects for recovery or likelihood of death may not be given.

Drug or Alcohol-Intoxication

No statements should be made regarding state of intoxication or lack thereof, or that an accident involved or did not involve alcohol or drugs.

Name of Physician

The name of the emergency physician handling a case should not be released without permission of the physician.

V. References

American Hospital Association

Responsible Owner:	Kelli Pippin		
Approved By:	Peter Glenshaw	Version #	2
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Cross Reference(s)			