

# YOUTH SERVICES POLICY

<b>Title:</b> Legislative Request/Communication, Media Access and Public Information <b>Next Annual Review Date:</b> 08/21/2017	<b>Type:</b> C. Field Operations <b>Sub Type:</b> 1. General <b>Number:</b> C.1.13
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<b>References:</b> La. R.S. 44, et seq. and 30:2043; the Public Records Act, Louisiana Administrative Code Title 4 Part XVII "Records Management Policies and Practices"; ACA Standards 2-CO-1A-25, 1A-26, 1A-27, and 1A-27-1 (Administration of Correctional Agencies), 4-JCF-6G-02, 4-JCF-6G-03, 4-JCF-6G-04 and 4-JCF-6G-05 (Performance-Based Standards for Juvenile Correctional Facilities); 2-7020 and 2-7020-1 (Standards for Juvenile Probation and Parole and Aftercare Services); YS Policy Nos. A.1.8 "Emergency Operations Plan", A.1.9 "Public Records Management", A.2.12 "Personnel Records", A.3.3 "Request for Statistical Information; Collection of Fees for Reproduction of Public Records and Statistical Reports", B.3.2 "Access to and Release of Active and Inactive Youth Records", B.8.15 "Family Liaison between Families of Youth and Youth Services", C.2.1 "Escapes, Runaways, Apprehensions, and Reporting", C.2.2 "Facility Riot, Significant Disturbance and Hostage Situation" and D.10.10 "Families in Need of Services"	
<b>STATUS: Approved</b>	
<b>Approved By:</b> <i>Mary L. Livers, Deputy Secretary</i>	<b>Date of Approval:</b> 08/21/2015

**I. AUTHORITY:**

Deputy Secretary of Youth Services (YS) as contained in La. R.S. 36:405. Deviation from this policy must be approved by the Deputy Secretary.

**II. PURPOSE:**

To establish the Deputy Secretary's policy for maintaining appropriate relationships with the public, legislators and their staff, other public officials, the news media, juvenile justice agencies, and other youth-serving agencies. Through these established relationships, YS shall promote a better understanding of the agency's goals, objectives and programs.

The agency's goal is to protect public safety by providing safe and effective individualized services to youth who have been adjudicated and placed in the custody or under the supervision of YS.

The objective is to assist adjudicated youth in redirecting their lives toward responsible citizenship so they will become productive, law-abiding citizens.

The primary clients of YS are youth who have been adjudicated delinquent or Families in Need of Services (FINS). (Refer to YS Policy No. D.10.10.) Services and programming include intensive residential care for secure care youth; residential group home services for non-secure care youth; probation and parole supervision, and court prevention and diversion programs.

**III. APPLICABILITY:**

Deputy Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Undersecretary, Deputy Undersecretary, Chief of Operations, Deputy Assistant Secretary, General Counsel, Director of Communications, Regional Directors, Facility Directors and Regional Managers.

**IV. DEFINITIONS:**

**Commercial Producers** - Photographers, writers and filmmakers and other media professionals who intend to sell their work product for profit.

**News Media/Media Representatives** - Individuals who are properly credentialed and represent identifiable news coverage organizations. A reporter/journalist/member of the news media is a person employed by, contracting with or freelancing for a bona fide news organization. Authors, photographers, videographers and filmmakers, whether commercial, freelance, independent or employed by a news medium, are included.

**Unit Head** - Deputy Secretary, Facility Directors and Regional Managers.

**YS Central Office** - Offices of the Deputy Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Undersecretary, Deputy Undersecretary, Chief of Operations, Deputy Assistant Secretary, General Counsel, Regional Directors, and their support staff.

**V. POLICY:**

It is the Deputy Secretary's policy to provide information that is truthful and accurate to the public, the media, legislators, and other agencies, consistent with the custody and privacy interests of YS, its staff, and youth. Confidential information shall be released pursuant with the law and agency policy. (Refer to YS Policy Nos. A.2.12 and B.3.2.)

At no time shall appropriate information be withheld from the news media and the public regarding emergency or non-emergency situations.

Data and information protected by the U. S. Freedom of Information Act or state privacy laws including public records statutes shall be provided timely to members of the public and the news media when requested. (Refer to YS Policy Nos. A.1.9 and A.3.3)

No information identifying any youth in YS custody or in any YS program shall be released to the public, with the exception that requests for information regarding a specific youth shall only be released pursuant with state statutes as contained in the Louisiana Children's Code or at the direction of the courts.

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In an emergency situation such as an escape from a secure care facility, residential group home or vehicle transporting a youth in custody, only physical descriptions of the youth shall be released as a public safety measure. (Refer to YS Policy No. C.2.1)

All news releases and other outreach materials contain contact information for the Director of Communications, including email addresses and telephone numbers. Members of the news media and the public are encouraged to contact the Director of Communications for needed information.

Agency telephones are equipped with voice mail allowing callers to leave messages when staff is unavailable.

All agency brochures and publications contain contact information for appropriate staff [i.e. recruitment brochures have contact information for the unit's Human Resources (HR) Liaisons and/or the Public Safety Services (PSS) HR Office; booklets, videos, etc., for youth and families have contact information for the Family Liaison, etc.]. (Refer to YS Policy No. B.8.15)

Contact information for particular members of the administration, including the General Counsel, Director of Communications, Secure Care Facility Administration, and Regional Managers, is easily found on the agency website at: <http://www.ojj.la.gov/>. Members of the public are encouraged to contact members of the administration using the telephone numbers and email addresses provided.

## **VI. PUBLIC INFORMATION PROCEDURES:**

- A. All YS staff shall be responsive to inquiries from the public, and local, state and federal agencies by providing prompt, complete responses to all correspondence and other requests.
- B. Inquiries from legislative and executive bodies shall be referred to authorized staff as designated by the Deputy Secretary. When a call from a public official is received, staff shall ensure they understand what is needed and when, and advise the caller that someone will get back to them as soon as possible. If the request is of an urgent nature, the Deputy Secretary shall be notified immediately. Responses and/or return phone calls shall be made by the Deputy Secretary/designee.

## **VII. MEDIA PROCEDURES:**

- A. The Director of Communications is responsible for the following:
  - 1. Public relations and public information activities;
  - 2. Serving as agency spokesperson after consultation with the Deputy Assistant Secretary and the Deputy Secretary;

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3. Coordinating media outreach through news releases, video releases or the use of other appropriate communication tools during emergency situations and non-emergency situations;
  4. Providing information regarding routine activities or special events to the public as appropriate; and
  5. Handling all media contact regarding agency activities.
- B. It is not the agency's intent to restrict access to local media or community groups by local staff. Facility Directors/Regional Managers are encouraged to inform local media about interesting, non-controversial events or accomplishments by staff or youth that may present opportunities to generate positive local human interest stories.

Facility Directors/Regional Managers may also respond to requests for such information by local media after consultation with the Director of Communications. In all cases where Facility Directors/Regional Managers have provided information to news media outlets, the Director of Communications shall be informed as a courtesy, and be provided news clippings if possible.

- C. News media members making inquiries, conducting interviews or seeking approval to visit a secure care facility, shall first contact the Director of Communications, who shall consider the scope of the story and the unit's ability to accommodate the visit prior to making a recommendation to the Deputy Secretary for approval.

In a non-emergency situation, media access shall be allowed to any area of YS Central Office and the CBS Regional Offices upon request.

In emergency situations, media access may be restricted to conference rooms or the offices of the Deputy Secretary, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Director of Communications or Regional Manager's Office. (Refer to YS Policy Nos. A.1.8, C.2.1 and C.2.2)

Upon request, media MAY be granted access to most areas of a YS secure care facility with approval from the Deputy Secretary and the Facility Director, so long as routine operations are not disrupted and the privacy and confidentiality of youth and staff are not breached. Concerns for the safety of youth, staff and visitors shall be a primary consideration.

In emergency situations, media access to a YS secure care facility shall be limited to briefings in roll call areas, conference rooms or other areas where visitors are unlikely to come into contact with youth and/or staff. The Director of Communications shall periodically brief media on the situation. (Refer to YS Policy No. C.2.2)

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In certain emergency situations where public safety is of concern, no media visits shall be allowed; briefings shall take place at YS Central Office or other location determined to be safe.

- D. Visitors to a YS secure care facility may be asked to participate in interviews and/or be audio or video recorded for YS/OJJ use. Therefore, all visitors shall execute a "Media Release (visitor)" form [see Attachment C.1.13 (a)], allowing YS to use their name, image or comments for agency purposes. Completed visitor forms shall be forwarded immediately to the Director of Communications, who shall maintain them in an appropriate file.
- E. The Unit Head shall notify the appropriate Regional Director and the Deputy Secretary of any significant or potentially controversial event.
- F. Upon receiving a request from national and/or international media, the Director of Communications shall notify the Deputy Assistant Secretary and the Deputy Secretary.
- G. The Director of Communications or Facility Director shall escort media visitors when they are present in a YS secure care facility or YS Central Office for the duration of the visit.
- H. The Director of Communications, Deputy Assistant Secretary, or the Deputy Secretary shall release information to the media regarding official matters. Staff may be called upon by the Director of Communications to provide information to the media. Staff shall be knowledgeable of issues and YS policies, and shall ensure the accuracy of information before releasing it.
- I. After consulting with an employee's supervisor, the Director of Communications may contact employees for information. If an employee is asked to give information directly to a reporter, the Director of Communications shall participate in the media interview. Employees shall provide accurate information to the Director of Communications and the reporter. With the exception of professional and management staff, employees are not required to speak with members of the news media.
- J. Employees may be contacted by a reporter about activities outside their job duties; employees are free to talk about personal activities. As a courtesy, employees are asked to let their supervisor and the Director of Communications know about such interviews.
- K. Media contacts with youth are at the discretion of the Deputy Secretary, with input from appropriate staff.
- L. Written permission must be obtained from a youth's parent/guardian or attorney prior to interviewing, photographing, and/or audio or video recording the youth, except when the youth is not identifiable. A youth 18 years old or older may sign a "Media Release (youth)" form [see Attachment C.1.13 (b)].

Completed youth forms shall be filed in the youth's Master Record, with a copy forwarded to the Director of Communications. (Refer to YS Policy No. B.3.2)

- M. Interviews with youth who are assigned to areas for behavior problems are discouraged.
- N. No remuneration shall be provided to any youth for media interviews. Media coverage that might enhance the status of an adjudicated youth is discouraged.

**VIII. COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION PROCEDURES:**

- A. Commercial producers seeking access to a YS secure care facility, employees or youth, are required to make a written request to the Director of Communications. Written requests must include the following:
  - 1. Name, job title and employer of person requesting visit (if free-lance, who they represent);
  - 2. Topic of story, where it will be used, purpose and anticipated release date of product;
  - 3. Name of individual(s) to be interviewed, if known;
  - 4. Date and time of arrival, anticipated duration;
  - 5. Name of all persons accompanying requestor; and
  - 6. If applicable, a hold harmless clause as follows: "I recognize that a visit to a Youth Services secure care facility may present certain risks/hazards. I agree to assume all ordinary and/or usual risks to my personal safety inherent in a visit to facilities of this type."
- B. Requests shall be forwarded to the Deputy Secretary for approval prior to project commencement.
- C. All commercial producers are required to sign a "Location Agreement" form [see Attachment C.1.13 (c)] upon their arrival at the unit. The "Location Agreement" shall specifically outline the scope of the work to be performed. If practicable, the Director of Communications must review the finished product prior to distribution to ensure that it has been made in compliance with the "Location Agreement" form. Location Agreements shall be maintained on file by Legal Services.

**IX. PUBLIC INFORMATION ACTIVITIES:**

- A. Appropriate relationships with community organizations are vital to public support of YS programs. Facility Directors/Regional Managers are encouraged to accept opportunities for speaking engagements and/or make presentations before community organizations and schools, to inform members of the public about agency activities and gain local support for programs.

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Facility Directors/Regional Managers should respond promptly to such requests for information or to provide speakers to civic organizations, schools, law enforcement agencies and other groups seeking an understanding of YS programs.

Facility Directors/Regional Managers should notify the appropriate Regional Director and the Director of Communications of such appearances.

- B. Facility Directors/Regional Offices shall maintain a supply of materials (brochures, booklets, DVDs, etc.) describing YS services and programs. Such materials shall be made available to youth in YS custody or under supervision, their families and the general public.

**Previous Regulation/Policy Number:** C.1.13  
**Previous Effective Date:** 07/08/2014

**Attachments/References:**

Form 5-12.docx



C.1.13 (a) Visitor Media Release

C.1.13 (b) Media

Release (youth) General Non-commercial Purposes 5-12.docx  
(c) Location Agreement Form 5-12.docx



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