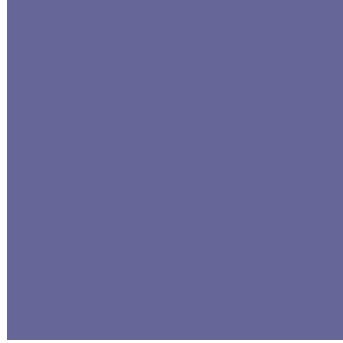




**Media Guidelines  
Beaumont Independent School District**



## + Media Guidelines



## Overview and Purpose

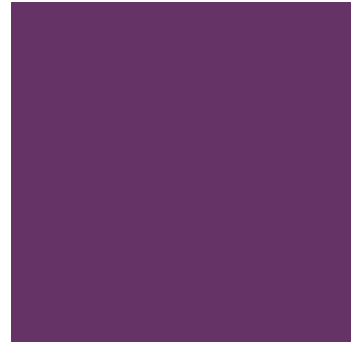


The Beaumont Independent School District supports the rights of citizens to have access to information that affects school programs and services for children in BISD. The District encourages positive relations with news reporters and other communications representatives. Positive relationships with the media are developed and maintained by providing accurate and helpful information to reporters in a timely manner. Dissemination of timely, accurate and newsworthy information to the community through the news media is the primary responsibility of the Office of Community and Media Relations, working in cooperation with school administrators and other departmental supervisors.

To ensure that information provided to the media is accurate, comprehensive and complete, and to ensure that reporters have appropriate access to the best sources of information, a protocol for providing information to the media has been established and outlined in this policy. School District employees shall not release information which is private or confidential as identified by law and Board policy or administrative regulation.

This policy also covers, among other issues, (1) designation of spokespersons for BISD, (2) the role of the BISD Office of Community and Media Relations, (3) procedures governing media access to Beaumont ISD facilities, (4) procedures for working with media personnel in emergencies, (5) procedures for conducting interviews and recording visual images at Beaumont ISD facilities and (6) news coverage and press releases.

The goal of this policy is to ensure that Beaumont ISD personnel be prepared to cooperate with media representatives and gain favorable media coverage.



# Procedures for Media

The director of community and media relations serves as the District's official spokesperson and conveys the official district position on issues of general district-wide impact or significance or situations that are of a particularly controversial or sensitive nature. The president of the Board serves as the primary spokesperson for the Board. Inquiries from the media about such issues should be referred to the Beaumont ISD Office of Community and Media Relations. Furthermore, all news coverage requests and news conferences must be coordinated through and by the Office of Community and Media Relations.

In the event of a crisis or emergency situation, the director of community and media relations will handle all contact with the media and will coordinate the information flow from the district to the public. In such situations, all campuses and departments must refer calls from the media to the Office of Community and Media Relations. Depending on the specific circumstance, the superintendent or the director of community and media relations may designate another district administrator to serve as spokesperson on a particular issue.

In special cases, the director of community and media relations will work with other district officials to develop a "position paper" to detail the known facts of the situation and summarize the district's position.



# News Media Interviews and Photography

Requests to film, interview, videotape, and photograph students or staff on district property must be first initiated through the Office of Community and Media Relations by phone or e-mail. Once permission has been granted, the requestor will be notified by phone and e-mail with specific instructions for fulfilling the request.

Steps for obtaining access to film, interview, videotape, and photograph students or staff on district property:

1. A formal request must be made through the Office of Community and Media Relations by the media representative.
2. The Office of Community and Media Relations will contact the campus or department for permission. The campus leader or department administrator may request on-site assistance from the Office of Community and Media Relations.
3. Upon approval, the requestor will be notified by phone and e-mail with specific instructions for fulfilling the request. This may include but not limited to check-in procedures for specific campus and the point of contact for their visit.

Requests for interviews will be granted only if the individual from whom the interview is being sought agrees to participate.

The following provisions are in accordance with the Texas Education Code, Title 2—Chapter 26, Section 26.009, Consent Required for Certain Activities.

A signed media form which is to be placed in student files and made available if requested (see attached) must be signed in order to film, videotape, or photograph students in classrooms, on campus, or at school-sponsored events.

Parental consent forms are not required for general images that do not directly identify students. In addition, parental consent forms are not required for filming, videotaping or photographing of students for classroom instructional purposes or co-curricular or extracurricular activities.



# News Media Access to District Schools and Facilities



Members of the media must follow campus and facility visitor check-in procedures which are specific to each location. The principal or their designee will escort media representatives while they are on district property.

The principal has the right to restrict access as they are responsible for maintaining order and ensuring the safety of all individuals on the campus. Media access to campuses must not interrupt the daily educational process.

In accordance with the Texas Education Code, Title 2—Chapter 37, Sections 37.105, *Unauthorized Persons: Refusal of Entry, Ejection, Identification*; and 37.107, *Trespass on School Grounds*, schools may refuse access to media representatives on school property if their presence or behavior would be disruptive to the school environment.

Media representatives who have not obtained proper approval from the Office of Community and Media Relations to film, interview, videotape, and photograph students or staff on district property will not be granted access to campuses or other district facilities.

## Crisis/ Emergency Situations

Beaumont ISD has developed procedures for dealing with potential student and school crises. Safety is the district's number one priority in crisis situations. When dealing with a situation that is life-threatening, building administrators should first contact emergency medical services personnel.

After emergency personnel has been contacted and depending on the severity of the situation, the building administrator should contact the BISD Police Department, then their direct supervisor, who will then contact the Office of Community and Media Relations.

To ensure student and staff safety during crisis/emergency events, media access to district facilities may be limited. An area will be designated on the campus or facility property to conduct news briefings or crisis emergency information for the public.

# + News Coverage and Press Releases

While the Beaumont ISD Office of Community and Media Relations cannot guarantee media coverage of any event or topic, Beaumont ISD has built a mutually beneficial relationship with several local and regional media outlets and consistently sends press releases, media advisories and other alerts to local newspapers, news stations and radio stations that has resulted and continues to result in positive coverage of the district.

The Office of Community and Media Relations promotes the district through press releases regarding special accomplishments, events and activities, programs and plans. All releases intended for off-campus or external audiences must be routed through the Office of Community and Media Relations for release to external publics. In other words, a press release generated by someone outside of the Office of Community and Media Relations must be reviewed prior to dissemination and will be officially disseminated by the Office of Community and Media Relations.

To submit a press release, please send a draft of the release by e-mail to [fjcrsjj@bmtisd.com](mailto:fjcrsjj@bmtisd.com). To have a press release drafted on your department or campus' behalf, please send an e-mail to [hletull@bmtisd.com](mailto:hletull@bmtisd.com). Draft press releases should be sent to the appropriate communications personnel at least one week in advance of the anticipated release date.

Should a representative of the media contact your campus or department asking questions or requesting an interview, immediately refer them to the Office of Community and Media Relations at 409-617-5043 or 409-203-5780. In consultation with the appropriate staff (i.e. building principal, department head, etc.) the Office of Community and Media Relations will determine the parameters of the media request and whether access to the campus and/or personnel will be granted.

If an interview has been approved, you will be contacted by Hannah LeTulle to proceed by e-mail and phone. It is recommended that a communication staff member be present during any media interview or at any time that media representatives visit a campus. Such notification and presence is important if follow-up inquiries are made with other district personnel to ensure a coordinated, consistent district response.

Again, all media inquiries should be referred to the Office of Community and Media Relations.

Guidelines for communicating with the media when the issue is non-controversial and limited to an activity or topic within a specific department or campus and an interview or media presence has been approved are as follows:

- Obtain the name of the media representative, the media organization and a contact number. Provide this information to the Office of Community and Media Relations.
- Make sure you understand each question from the media before answering. If you cannot answer the question, or are uncomfortable providing a response, take the reporter's number and advise him/her that someone who can provide the information will contact him/her as soon as possible. Then follow-up by contacting the Office of Community and Media Relations.
- Do not offer speculations or gossip. Do not answer a reporter's question with "no comment." Do not be condescending or underestimate the reporter's intelligence, but make sure the reporter understands your responses.
- Remember that in responding to the media, you can be seen as representing and speaking for the district. Personal opinions should be excluded.
- Issues that should not be discussed with reporters are 1) legal issues, 2) personnel issues, 3) questions that involve ethics or issues that may result in harm to others, 4) issues involving specific students or 5) a campus crisis or emergency. Immediately refer all such inquiries to the Office of Community and Media Relations.
- Any media inquiries that involve information about specific students should be directed to the Office of Community and Media Relations, which will consult with the Office of Student Services. Such inquiries will be handled in strict compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA.) This federal law protects the confidentiality of a student's education record. Information that may be given includes information found in a directory: the student's full name, local address and phone number, dates of attendance and degrees, honors and certificates received, class level (e.g. freshman), and academic major(s). Grades may only be provided to the media if a student wishes to release the information in connection with an award or scholarship.
- Any media inquiries regarding Beaumont ISD employees should be referred to the Office of Community and Media Relations, which will consult with the Office of Human Resources. Only public information may be provided without the employee's written approval. Public information is the following: verification of employment, name of job title/position, full or part-time status, name of department, department address and phone number, employment starting date, salary/grade, and rank.

## + References

- Brock, S., Lazarus, P., Jimerson, S. (2002). *Best Practices in School Crisis Prevention and Intervention*. Bethesda, MD.
- Dwyer, K., Osher, D., Warger, C. (1998). *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools*. U.S. Department of Education.
- Houston Independent School District. *Media Guidelines*. Houston, TX.
- Kaufman, R. (2007). *Crisis Communication and Management*. National School Public Relations Association's School Public Relations: Building Confidence in Education. Rockville, MD
- Los Angeles Unified School District. (2001). *Standard Emergency Procedures for Schools*. Los Angeles, CA: Office of Environmental Health and Safety.
- National Education Association Health Information Network. (2006). *School Crisis Guide: Help and Healing in a Time of Crisis*. Washington, D.C.
- National School Public Relations Association. (2009). *The Complete Crisis Communication Management Manual for Schools*. Rockville, MD.
- Poudre School District (1999). *Crisis Response and Resources*. Fort Collins, CO.
- Thompson, R.A. (1990, February). *Strategies for Crisis Management in Schools*. National Association of Secondary School Principals, Bulletin, 54-58.
- U.S. Department of Education. *Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Communities and Schools*. (ID #: ED003416P). Washington, D.C.