



FRANKLIN COUNTY JAIL

Chambersburg, PA

Standard Operating Procedure

Chapter:	300	Inmate Services	Number:	300.18	Pages:	6
Title:	18	Media Relations	Effective Date:	06/01/2007		
Approved By:	<i>William Bechtold</i> William Bechtold, Warden		Revised Date:	6/22/2020		

POLICY

It is the policy of the Franklin County Jail (FCJ) to permit incarcerated inmates to have access to the news media as long as it does not interfere with the safety and security of the facility. While allowing access to the news media, the facility will protect the privacy and rights of inmates and staff alike.

The Franklin County Jail will provide designated staff to effectively and accurately communicate information during an incident, emergency or planned event. The jail may also assist the media in coverage of its operations by providing access to its operations where such access does not affect the security of the facility or the privacy of inmates and employees.

PURPOSE

To establish the guidelines for approving, disapproving and conducting interviews of staff and confined individuals, as well as communicate critical information effectively to the public.

REFERENCES

None

DEFINITIONS

Administrative Segregation (AS): A classification term applied to those individuals who require closer supervision and more stringent control that can not be provided in a general population setting. It is not a punitive status.

Disciplinary Segregation (DS): The placement of an inmate into a confined area within the correctional facility, following the approval of a due process disciplinary hearing in which disciplinary segregation is a sanction imposed.

Public Information Officers (PIO): Properly identified representatives of the jail who are the communications coordinators or spokespersons of the organization. The primary role of the

PIO is to oversee the organization's contact with the media and to disseminate critical information through the media to the public.

Press Pool: A group of news gathering organizations pooling their resources in the collection of news.

PROCEDURES

Inmate Media Contact

1. Failure of the news media representative(s) to abide by the following conditions established by this policy and the rules and regulations of the facility constitutes grounds for denying requests for an interview or terminating any interviews in progress.
 - 1.1 An interview may be denied for any of the following reasons:
 - The news media representative does not agree with the conditions established by this policy
 - The inmate is physically or mentally unable to participate. Any denial for physical or mental reasons must be verified by the facility physician, or in the case of denial on mental health grounds, a psychologist or psychiatrist, either of which will submit written verification to the Warden that substantiates the denial. No information will be given to the news media representative, due to confidentiality reasons, other than the interview would not be in the best interest of the inmate
 - The interview, in the opinion of the Warden, would endanger the health or safety of the interviewer, or would adversely affect the good of the jail
 - The Courts forbidding such interviews have issued a "gag" order
 - The inmate is in need of protection and information regarding his/her whereabouts would endanger the inmate's safety
 - The inmate is the subject of an on-going internal investigation or involved in litigation regarding the Franklin County Jail
 - The inmate is in a special custody status
 - The interview is regarding jail policy, procedure, or conditions
2. Inmate Interview Requests
 - 2.1 A news media representative who desires to conduct an interview with an inmate must make an application in writing to the Warden no less than forty-eight (48) hours before the expected interview date and time. The application will contain at minimum the following information:
 - Reporter(s) name(s)
 - Employer/Business name and address
 - Supervisors name and title
 - Inmates full name
 - Contact numbers for reporter and supervisor
 - Requested interview date
 - Purpose of interview
 - Type of equipment requested to be used
 - Type of interview (telephone or on site)

- 2.2 An inmate has the right not to be interviewed by the news media. Before approval of any requests for an interview, the inmate must sign a written consent form for the interview and the use of any audio, video, or film equipment (FCJ Form 300.18-2 - Inmate Consent for Media Interview) The original copy of the consent form will be placed in the inmates file.
 - 2.2.1 If the inmate declines the request to be interviewed, further requests to the inmate by the same media outlet or representative will not be forwarded for at least one hundred and eighty (180) days.
 - 2.2.2 Inmates on Disciplinary Segregation will not be granted interviews. Inmates on Administrative Segregation will only be granted interviews based on the approval of the Warden.
- 2.3 Prior to the interview, the news media representative will receive a copy of this policy for review. After reading the policy the news media will be required to sign a consent form (FCJ Form 300.18-1 - Media Interview Agreement Form) stating they understand and agree to comply with the rules and regulations of this policy and the facility.
- 2.4 Interview times will be scheduled so as to not adversely affect the operation of the facility.
 - 2.4.1 In order to minimize interference with normal visitation, the interview will be conducted in the attorney/client room of the inmate's housing unit. If the attorney/client room is unavailable, other arrangements will be made for the interview.
 - 2.4.2 Interviews are prohibited in the inmate's cell, housing unit, or any other area that is deemed to be a security concern for the facility.
 - 2.4.3 Interviews will be limited in time to one (1) hour in length. Request for more time must be made prior to the date of interview.
 - 2.4.4 The interview will be limited to two (2) members of the same news media agency.
- 2.5 Telephone interviews will be permitted and must be requested in advance. Telephone interviews will be conducted via a conference call with the interviewer.
 - 2.5.1 If approved, a date and time will be set for the interview. A conference call will be placed by a FCJ staff member (who will remain present with the inmate during the interview) to the interviewer.
 - 2.5.2 The interviewer is subject to any restrictions set forth by this policy. Telephone interviews via the inmate telephone system will not permitted.
- 2.6 A member of the correctional staff shall be present for all interviews to ensure adherence to this policy.

3. Staff Interviews

- 3.1 Requests for staff interviews should be directed to the Warden or his designee. Employees may only speak to the media regarding matters related to the Franklin County Jail with the express written consent of the Warden. Consent must be obtained each time a request is made.
- 3.2 Employees participating in official union business may have contact with the media but cannot speak as an official representative of the jail.

4. Rules and Regulations

- 4.1 A request for an interview (staff or inmate) can be denied at anytime.
- 4.2 All news media representatives are subject to search of his/her person and property while on FCJ property.
- 4.3 News media representatives should understand that a visit to a jail presents certain hazards and agrees to assume all risk to his/her personal safety.
- 4.4 For the safety of the interviewer, a correction's officer will be present at all times during the interview and is authorized to intervene or halt the interview if the inmate or reporter fails to follow the stated guidelines.
- 4.5 Staff members are not permitted to make any comment or answer any questions asked by the news media representative, unless given approval by the Warden or his designee. All questions should be directed to the appropriate staff member (i.e. Warden).
- 4.6 In the event of an emergency, all media representatives should locate the nearest correctional officer for instructions.
- 4.7 All media representatives will be issued identification badges before conducting the interview. These badges are to be openly displayed at all times. (FCJ SOP 200.16 – Security Badges/Inmate ID)
- 4.8 If authorized by the Warden the use of audio, video or film equipment, or the number of personnel to be involved in the interview must be determined prior to the interview taking place. If approved, only a minimal amount of equipment, as follows, will be permitted in the jail.
- TV Crews: One (1) camera, tripod, one (1) light, and two (2) microphones.
 - Radio: Two (2) microphones and one (1) recorder
 - Print Media: One (1) still camera, and a voice recorder
- 4.9 Press pool interviews of inmates are not permitted.
- 4.10 Members of the media are not permitted to give items to inmates during an interview, and inmates are not permitted to give any items to a media representative during the interview.

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- 4.11 No inmate interviews will be broadcasted via live-feed. The Warden or his designee may permit news media representatives to do live broadcasts from the public parking lot near the facility as long as no security risk or traffic disruption is created.
 - 4.12 Photography of inmate faces is prohibited unless an inmate release is obtained and signed by the inmate in advance.
 - 4.13 Staff will not interfere with the media's attempt to photograph inmates who are being released from the facility unless there is a security or safety interest as determined by the Warden or his designee.
5. Emergency Situations
- 5.1 In the event of an emergency (fire, riot, hostage situation, natural disasters, etc.) the first and primary concern will be for the safety and security of the staff and inmates.
 - 5.2 Media coverage will be coordinated by the Public Information Officer, Warden or his designee. A media briefing area will be established.
 - 5.3 Only the Public Information Officer, Warden or his designee will talk to the media during a crisis.

ATTACHMENTS

FCJ Form 300.18-1 Media Interview Agreement
FCJ Form 300.18-2 Inmate Consent for Media Interview