

## Media working with Island Health

### GENERAL INFORMATION

Island Health recognizes that health care is a public service, accountable to the province and the residents of B.C. Island Health encourages open and timely communication with media as a means to build public confidence in the health care system and promote Island Health's reputation and integrity.

Island Health's guiding philosophies toward media relations are to:

- Provide timely responses to media inquiries.
- Provide factual information while ensuring patient confidentiality and safety are protected as required by law and Island Health policy.
- Seek proactive and positive media coverage when opportunities arise.

Media relations are a function of Island Health's Communications and Media Relations team. All media inquiries and requests for interviews about Island Health patients/residents/clients, services, staff, facilities or administration must be made through Island Health's Media Relations team. This includes interviews that are initiated by a patient or staff member. Island Health's Communications and Media Relations team will support and facilitate interviews at Island Health facilities when appropriate, while ensuring that the privacy, confidentiality and dignity of patients, clients, visitors and staff is respected.

### GUIDELINES

#### 1. *Access to Island Health Facilities and Property:*

- All requests for media access to Island Health facilities or exterior properties ("grounds") must be coordinated through, and approved by, Island Health Communications and Media Relations. With prior approval from Communications and Media Relations, media will be permitted on Island Health exterior grounds, when appropriate.
- In exceptional circumstances, access to Island Health exterior grounds may be restricted.
- Media activities cannot violate the rights to privacy of Island Health patients/residents/clients or staff, obstruct access to any facility or cause a disturbance.
- With prior approval by Communications and Media Relations and the leadership team responsible for the facility, media may be permitted inside Island Health facilities with the escort of a Communications and Media Relations team representative, or designate.
- Certain areas of the hospital (e.g., in-patient, ICU, ORs), and some facilities (e.g., long-term care homes) are generally not accessible to media due to reasons related to infection control, high care needs of patients and privacy considerations of residents.

## 2. Interviews, Photographs, Videotaping:

- All media requests for interviews, photographs or video about Island Health patients/residents/clients, services, staff, facilities or administration must be made through Island Health Communications and Media Relations.
- If a patient/family/guardian initiates a media contact or interview on Island Health property, they must complete and sign the media consent form prior to being interviewed, photographed or videotaped. Media must contact Island Health Communications and Media Relations prior to accessing Island Health property to interview patients/residents/clients. This form is available through Island Health Communications and Media Relations.
- An Island Health Communications and Media Relations representative or designate will be present during any interview with a patient/resident/client inside an Island Health facility, except by specific prior arrangement.

## 3. Personal Information about specific patients/residents/clients or staff:

- In accordance with Island Health's confidentiality policy and the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA), Island Health does not normally share details containing personal information or comment on an individual patient/resident/client or staff member. Patients/residents/clients, or if incapable, the legal representative of that person, [may request a copy](#) of their health records. Individuals or their legal representative may then choose to share those records with media, at their own discretion.
- Information confirming that a patient is currently admitted to an Island Health facility may be provided to media with patient consent, or if incapable, the legal representative of that person, unless the patient has been designated as a "no information patient." Media must have the full name (first and last) of the patient before admittance to a facility can be confirmed.
- Media requests for "no information" patients are responded to by indicating "I have no information to provide on that individual."
- A "no information patient" means the patient, a family member, guardian, police or other authority has requested that no information be released about the person, including whether they are even receiving care at an Island Health facility.

- At the direction of the Island Health Chief Medical Health Officer, patients/residents/clients consent to release information or a name is not required in a situation deemed to pose a risk to public health. This information is released by the Chief Medical Health Officer or their designate.
- Island Health Communications and Media Relations cannot confirm information about the death of a patient. Media with questions about the death a patient will be redirected to the BC Coroner Service and/or police.

**CONTACT INFORMATION AT ISLAND HEALTH FOR MEDIA**

**General Media Inquiries (during regular business hours):**

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| South Vancouver Island/Cowichan Valley    | 250-370-8908 |
| Central/North Vancouver Island/West Coast | 250-755-7966 |

**Urgent after-hours inquiries (after regular business hours, weekends, holidays)**

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| All locations | 250-716-7750 |
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**\*\*Note:** This is a Nanaimo-based number which is call-forwarded to the Communications staff member on call. As on call responsibilities are rotated among Communications staff, please do not use email or staff telephone numbers for urgent, after hours inquiries. This is a phone line only – please do not text to this number.