

Document Number:	BOH.002
Document Title:	Lewis and Clark City-County Board of Health Media Policy
Document Owner	Lewis and Clark City-County Board of Health
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Approved By:	Anne Weber, Chair
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1.0 Purpose

To ensure that communication with the public through traditional and social media by the Lewis and Clark City-County Board of Health and its individual members is handled in a consistent, appropriate, and strategic manner that helps to support the mission of Lewis and Clark Public Health and local government in general.

2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all members of the Board of Health, as well as all members of committees, work groups, and task forces appointed by the Board of Health. In addition, it may affect staff of the Health Department.

3.0 Policy

Background: Reports by news media about the Lewis and Clark City-County Board of Health (Board of Health) influence public perception of and confidence in the board and its role in overseeing public health functions in our community. News reports about the board and its activities also may affect public perceptions of Lewis and Clark Public Health (Health Department), local government, and public health, in general.

For these reasons, the Board of Health has elected to define, through this policy, the responsibilities of its members with regard to 1) requests for information from representatives of the news media and 2) proactive strategies for disseminating information to the public through traditional and social media.

It shall be the policy of the Board of Health to ensure that all communications with the media are:

- Accurate
- Timely
- Consistent
- Professional
- Transparent

4.0 Procedures

- The chair of the Board of Health will serve as spokesperson for the board and in that capacity will
 - represent the views and positions of the full board;
 - inform board members, the city-county health officer, and the Health Department Communications Office of any contact with the media as the board representative (preferably in advance);
 - initiate statements to the media upon approval of the Board of Health; and

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- designate other board members or the health officer to act as spokesperson when appropriate.

If no member of the Board of Health is available to provide requested information to a reporter, the health officer, who is the primary spokesperson for the Health Department and has the authority to speak on any issue of public health importance, may contact the media on the board’s behalf. Alternatively, the health officer may delegate this role to a knowledgeable staff member when appropriate.

- The board chair or designee will respond to media inquiries in a timely fashion, recognizing that reporters have deadlines to meet. If another priority prevents a prompt response, the chair or designee should let the reporter know when he/she can expect a response.
- At the request of the board through the health officer, the Communications Office of the Health Department may develop and disseminate news releases and other media outreach on behalf of the board. The Communications Office does not act as a spokesperson for the board unless directly asked to do so by the board chair with the approval of the health officer.
- Any board member may provide copies of handouts from board meetings to members of the media.
- When speaking to the media on behalf of the board, spokespersons should not speculate or express personal opinions.
- Any information provided in an article, column, letter to the editor, media interview, or social media post that is represented as the viewpoint of the full board must be reviewed by all board members and approved in advance by consensus. If the board is unable to reach consensus, a majority vote is required.
- This policy recognizes the right to free speech of any board member communicating about health-related issues as a citizen of this community. However, in such instances, board members are expected to clarify that they are not speaking as representatives of the board. For example, any column or letter to the editor submitted by a board member should specifically state that it does not represent the views of the Board of Health.
- Questions or concerns about application of this policy should be directed to the Health Officer and the Health Department’s Communications Office.

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