

October 2015

Media Working with Island Health

GENERAL INFORMATION

Island Health (the Vancouver Island Health Authority) recognizes that health care is a public service, accountable to the province and the residents of B.C. As such, we believe the public and media have a right to information about certain issues involving Island Health, its patients/residents/clients and staff. 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.

With this in mind, Island Health's guiding philosophies toward media relations are to:

- Provide timely responses to media inquiries.
- Provide factual information in an honest and forthright manner 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 Public Relations Department. All media inquiries and requests for interviews about Island Health patients/residents/clients, services, staff, facilities or administration must be made through Island Health Communications and Public Relations. This includes interviews that are initiated by a patient or staff member. Island Health Communications and Public Relations will support and facilitate interviews at our facilities, while ensuring that the privacy and confidentiality of our 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. With prior approval from Communications, media will be permitted on Island Health grounds outside without restriction.
- In exceptional circumstances, access to Island Health 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 key individuals responsible for the affected area, media may be permitted inside Island Health facilities with the escort of a Communications representative, or designate.
- Certain areas of the hospital (e.g., in-patient, ICU, ORs), and some facilities (e.g., extended care facilities) 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 Public 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 Public Relations prior to accessing Island Health property to interview patients/residents/clients. This form is available through Island Health Communications and Public Relations.
- An Island Health Communications and Public 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 (FOIPPA), details containing personal information about an individual patient/resident/client or staff member can be released to the media ONLY with the consent of the patient/resident/client/staff or if incapable, the legal representative of that person, or as authorized by law. In general, once such consent is obtained, Island Health provides the information to the patient/resident/client/staff and they can provide it to the media if they so choose.
- Information confirming that a patient is currently admitted to an Island Health facility may be provided to media without patient consent, 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.
- Patient/resident/client consent is not required to give a one-word condition report (“good/stable/serious/critical”), unless the patient is identified as a “no information patient.” The following terminology is used to indicate condition:
 - Good: Vital signs are stable and within normal limits. Patient is conscious and comfortable; indicators are excellent.
 - Stable: Vital signs are stable and within normal limits. Patient is conscious, possibly uncomfortable; indicators are favourable.
 - Serious: Vital signs may be unstable and not within normal limits. Patient is acutely ill; indicators are questionable.
 - Critical: Vital signs are unstable and not within normal limits. Patient may not be conscious; indicators are unfavourable.

- At the direction of the Island Health Chief Medical Health Officer, 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.
- In general, Island Health Communications and Public Relations will not confirm the death of specific patients. Exceptions to this may be made on a case-by-case basis.
- With the specific signed consent of the patient/family/guardian, Island Health may release limited patient information as follows:
 - Full name of patient
 - Patient’s age
 - Patient’s home community
 - Confirmation of hospitalization
 - Admission and discharge dates
 - Confirmation of birth, if applicable
 - Condition as outlined above.

CONTACT INFORMATION AT ISLAND HEALTH FOR MEDIA

General Media Inquiries:

South Vancouver Island	250-370-8908
Central Vancouver Island/West Coast	250-739-6303
North Vancouver Island/Comox Valley/Campbell River	250-739-6303

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

All locations	1-250-716-7750
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****Note:** This is a Nanaimo-based number which is call-forwarded to the Communications staff member on call at any given time. As on call responsibilities are rotated among Communications staff, please do not use email for urgent, after hours inquiries. Please use the 24/7 number above.

Specific facilities during regular business hours:

Campbell River Hospital:	250-739-6303
Cowichan District Hospital:	250-739-6303
Lady Minto Hospital:	250-370-8908
Nanaimo Regional General Hospital:	250-739-6303
Port Hardy Hospital:	250-739-6303
Port McNeill Hospital:	250-739-6303
Royal Jubilee Hospital:	250-370-8908
Saanich Peninsula Hospital:	250-370-8908
Tofino General Hospital:	250-739-6303
Victoria General Hospital:	250-370-8908
West Coast General Hospital:	250-739-6303