

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

POLICY MEMORANDUM No. 15 (R)

TO: All Departments, Boards, Agencies and Commissions

FROM: Kurt D. Steiner, Chief Administrative Officer

SUBJECT: PROCEDURES FOR THE RELEASE OF INFORMATION TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC
BY CITY DEPARTMENTS

1. PURPOSE.

This policy is designed to increase the flow of public information by outlining the administrative framework for the dissemination of public information. This policy replaces Policy Memorandum No. 15, dated September 14, 1981.

2. PROCEDURE.

A. Dissemination of Public Information When Initiated by City Administration:

The Office of Public Information shall assist the Mayor's Executive Assistants, the Chief Administrative Office, and department heads with their news media needs. Directors and executives are encouraged to identify their specific media needs in order to integrate them with the City's coordinated information strategy.

Information which may affect the public generally and is otherwise newsworthy will be forwarded to the Office of Public Information which will initiate full news media contact and arrange for media access to the City representatives who have complete and timely information on the subject.

1. Departments wishing to issue public announcements or news releases or schedule news conferences shall do so through the Office of Public Information. Department heads requesting a news release for a planned or scheduled event shall provide the necessary background material and information in writing at least one week in advance. Final approval and necessary revisions shall be the responsibility of the Office of Public Information. Announcements which affect more than one City department shall be coordinated by the Office of Public Information.

2. Each City agency shall provide the Office of Public Information with a quarterly report on the department's activities. The reports shall include a listing of any projects planned, in progress or recently completed.

a) Quarterly activity reports are due on the last work day of the succeeding quarters.

b) Each department shall appoint a departmental liaison who shall be responsible for coordinating matters with the Office of Public Information. The name and phone number of the departmental liaison shall be included on the quarterly report.

B. Dissemination of Public Information When initiated By the News Media:

1. Charter department heads shall respond to the best of their ability in their contacts with the news media. Though department heads speak in an official capacity as representatives of their areas, they are not to be construed as the Mayor's spokespersons. The same applies for heads of the City's unattached boards and commissions. The Only officially delegated spokespersons for the Mayor shall be the Director and Deputy Director of Public Information.

2. Employees shall refer any questions from the news media to their department head unless otherwise instructed by their department head along with the prior approval of the Office of Public Information.

3. If, in the opinion of the department director, the news story printed/aired may stimulate additional inquiries by news media, then the Office of Public Information should be notified to assist in coordination (e.g., arranging a news briefing, making full media contact, etc.) between the news media and the department head.

4. Information requested by one or more news media representatives, which is not available at the time of request, shall be given to only those who had requested such information, when it does become available. The information will then be made available to all other news persons on request once the story has been made available to those who initially requested such material. This practice is known as protecting the "enterprise" efforts of reporters.

5. The Office of Public Information shall be informed of one-on-one interviews with the press and news media—whether on or off the record.
6. News media inquiries relating to administrative studies and reports, which are being prepared for or by the Chief Administrative Office, should be referred to the Office of Public Information.

C. Notification of Public Meetings:

Departments shall proceed in their normal practices as required by law, City Charter, etc., in notification of public meetings:

1. Departments shall notify the Office of Public Information of such public meetings, any changes in time and place to be held, or other pertinent data such as planned agenda, etc. This information should be sent to the Office of Public Information two weeks in advance of the event, if possible. Changes should be communicated to the Office of Public Information as soon as they are known.
2. Scheduled public meetings will be noted on the news media calendar located in the Office of Public Information. If agendas are available for such meetings, copies will be released to the media with sufficient lead time to allow media representatives to decide whether the events are newsworthy enough to justify coverage.

D. Documents Presented at Public Meetings:

1. One copy of any report, proposal, or study which is to be presented at a public meeting shall be given to the Office of Public Information, in advance of the meeting. Departments may be requested to provide additional copies if deemed necessary.

E. Inspection of Public Records:

1. Policy Memorandum No. 40, dated February 3, 1977 entitled Inspection of Public Records, governs City Policy relative to this issue in accordance with the Public records Act. Any requests for access to the City public records should be handled in the manner set forth in Policy Memorandum No. 40.

3. INQUIRIES

Any questions concerning this policy should be referred to the Director of the Office of Public Information. It is the responsibility of department

heads and executive assistants to communicate this policy to their respective staffs.

Kurt D. Steiner
Chief Administrative Officer

KDS:LRF:ch