	TITLE OF THE POLICY: RELEASE OF INFORMATION TO MEDIA	Policy Number: COM-0350
	Policy Tool: Policy	Policy Level: Level I
	Accountability: Corporate Communications and Government Relations	Page 1 of 8

Approval Date	<i>July 8, 2021</i>
Revision Date	<i>January 2008, August 2011, January 4, 2021</i>
Approved by	<i>Andree Robichaud, CEO</i>
Approver Signature	
Scheduled Review Date	<i>July 2024</i>
Cross- Reference	<i>3-50 Release of Client Information to Media</i>

PURPOSE


The purpose of this policy is to ensure the authorized disclosure of information through media outlets while protecting the privacy and confidentiality of Central Health client and business information.

SCOPE

This policy applies to disclosure of client and business information by Central Health Corporate Communications and Government Relations and Central Health employees/ affiliated individuals. This policy applies to personal correspondence from employees and/or affiliated individuals to media outlets. All correspondence concerning Central Health business information, not otherwise available publicly, is subject to Central Health People and Culture policies for employee conduct and confidentiality.

This policy does not limit a right of access to a record in the custody or control of Central Health as authorized by the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015 (ATIPPA, 2015)*. This policy does not apply to social media posts made by employees and/or affiliated individuals. See *Social Media Policy (add link)* for direction on social media posting by Central Health employees and/or affiliated individuals.


This is a controlled document. Printed copies of this document are not controlled. Users must view the electronic version of this policy located on Central Health's Intranet to ensure the most up to date policy is consulted.

	TITLE OF THE POLICY: RELEASE OF INFORMATION TO MEDIA	Policy Number: COM-0350
	Policy Tool: Policy	Policy Level: Level I
	Accountability: Corporate Communications and Government Relations	Page 2 of 8

DEFINITIONS


Affiliated Individuals	Individuals who are not employed by Central Health, but perform specific tasks at or for the organization, including, but not limited to, trustees, students, volunteers, pastoral care, researchers, contractors, vendors and individuals working at the organization, but funded through an external source.
Business Information	Information with respect to Central Health's business that is not publicly disclosed by the organization. Employees / affiliates may come in contact with such information that is not generally known to the public as they perform their duties. Examples include, but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) legal matters involving the organization that are not public knowledge; (ii) financial information that is not available in Central Health's annual report; (iii) contractual agreements with vendors, consultants, contractors, and third parties (The confidentiality of this information may be written into the contract, e.g. non- disclosure of the cost of the service); (iv) information about intellectual property such as development of new technology and treatments or unpublished reports; and (v) information pertaining to Central Health's information (vi) technology access and security systems.
Client	A person who avails of the services of an authority, and includes a client, patient and/or resident.
Knowledgeable Consent	A consent to the collection, use or disclosure of personal health information about an individual shall be considered to be knowledgeable if it is reasonable in the circumstances to believe that the individual knows <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the purpose of the collection, use or disclosure as provided for in subsection 20(2); (b) that he or she may give or withhold consent; and

This is a controlled document. Printed copies of this document are not controlled. Users must view the electronic version of this policy located on Central Health's Intranet to ensure the most up to date policy is consulted.

	TITLE OF THE POLICY: RELEASE OF INFORMATION TO MEDIA	Policy Number: COM-0350
	Policy Tool: Policy	Policy Level: Level I
	Accountability: Corporate Communications and Government Relations	Page 3 of 8

	(c) that the information may be only collected, used or disclosed without his or her consent in accordance with this Act.
Media Outlet	A broadcasting communication channel providing news, information and feature stories to the public by way of newspapers, magazines, social media, the Internet, television, and radio.
Representative	<p>A right or power of an individual may be exercised:</p> <p>(a) by a person with written authorization from the individual to act on the individual's behalf;</p> <p>(b) where the individual lacks the competency to exercise the right or power or is unable to communicate, and where the collection, use or disclosure of his or her personal health information is necessary for or ancillary to a "health care decision", as defined in the <i>Advance Health Care Directives Act</i> , by a substitute decision maker appointed by the individual in accordance with that Act or, where a substitute decision maker has not been appointed, a substitute decision maker determined in accordance with section 10 of that Act;</p> <p>(c) by a court appointed guardian of a mentally disabled person, where the exercise of the right or power relates to the powers and duties of the guardian;</p> <p>(d) by the parent or guardian of a minor where, in the opinion of the custodian, the minor does not understand the nature of the right or power and the consequences of exercising the right or power;</p> <p>(e) where the individual is deceased, by the individual's personal representative or, where there is no personal representative, by the deceased's nearest relative, and for this purpose, the identity of the nearest relative may be determined by reference to section 10 of the <i>Advance Health Care Directives Act</i>;</p> <p>(f) where the adult is declared in need of protective intervention</p>

This is a controlled document. Printed copies of this document are not controlled. Users must view the electronic version of this policy located on Central Health's Intranet to ensure the most up to date policy is consulted.

	TITLE OF THE POLICY: RELEASE OF INFORMATION TO MEDIA	Policy Number: COM-0350
	Policy Tool: Policy	Policy Level: Level I
	Accountability: Corporate Communications and Government Relations	Page 4 of 8

	<p>within the meaning of the <i>Adult Protection Act</i> and is supervised by the Regional Director, or is in the care and custody of the Provincial Director; or</p> <p>(g) where an individual has been certified as an involuntary patient under the <i>Mental Health Care and Treatment Act</i>, by a representative as defined in that Act, except as otherwise provided in this Act.</p>
--	--

POLICY STATEMENT(S)

All media requests for comment to or comment by a Central Health employee or an affiliated individual must be coordinated through Central Health Corporate Communications and Government Relations, in consultation with the Central Health privacy representative.


Release of Client Information

Corporate Communications and Government Relation, employees or affiliated individuals must not release to the media any identifying information or combination of information that may identify an individual without the knowledgeable consent of the client/ representative to whom the information relates. Central Health must not confirm if an individual is in receipt of services or care of the organization without consent of the client/representative.

Details about a client may be released to the media **only** if the client or their representative has provided direct written consent to the release of information. This must be documented in the client's medical record by the care team.

Central Health must not comment on any issues that are the subject of criminal or other investigations or are involved in any legal or quasi-judicial proceeding, except as authorized by law.

This is a controlled document. Printed copies of this document are not controlled. Users must view the electronic version of this policy located on Central Health's Intranet to ensure the most up to date policy is consulted.

	TITLE OF THE POLICY: RELEASE OF INFORMATION TO MEDIA	Policy Number: COM-0350
	Policy Tool: Policy	Policy Level: Level I
	Accountability: Corporate Communications and Government Relations	Page 5 of 8

Special Circumstances

Prominent persons or high profile clients, such as public figures, or other publicly known individuals, must be advised to have information about their condition released by their own sources, which may have the liberty to release detailed information Central Health is unable to provide. In such cases, Corporate Communications and Government Relations will refer all media to that source.

Where a high-profile client chooses not to release information through their own source, Central Health must have written consent before any personal health information, including acknowledgment of their presence can be released.

Public Health Risks


At the direction of the Medical Officer of Health, consent to release information to the media is not required in situations deemed to pose a risk to public health. However, information related to a public health investigation, particularly details that may identify an individual, are released primarily only if required in order to protect the public. The information released must be limited to the minimum amount of information necessary to accomplish the purpose for which it is disclosed.

This may occur in a situation where a risk to the public has been identified and releasing the information can decrease that risk. If this circumstance arises, every effort will be made to notify a client and/or their family prior to releasing information to the media/public unless otherwise authorized by law.

Release of Business Information

The media may submit a request for disclosure of records to Central Health as authorized by the *ATIPPA, 2015*. Requests for disclosure of records must be directed through the Central Health Access to Information and Protection of

This is a controlled document. Printed copies of this document are not controlled. Users must view the electronic version of this policy located on Central Health's Intranet to ensure the most up to date policy is consulted.

	TITLE OF THE POLICY: RELEASE OF INFORMATION TO MEDIA	Policy Number: COM-0350
	Policy Tool: Policy	Policy Level: Level I
	Accountability: Corporate Communications and Government Relations	Page 6 of 8

Privacy Coordinator as published through the Provincial Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Office.

Media requests may be managed informally outside of the access to information and protection of privacy process, through Corporate Communications and Government Relations. Release of business information to media must be authorized by the Senior Management Team.


Central Health employees and affiliated individuals are bound by an Oath/Affirmation of Confidentiality, which includes, though is not limited to, business information. Central Health employees and affiliated individuals must not disclose business information to the media without consultation with Corporate Communications and Government Relations, unless authorized by law.

Where an employee or affiliated individuals reasonably believes that they have information that could show that a wrongdoing has been committed or is about to be committed, the employee may make a disclosure to the Citizens' Representative, as authorized by the *Public Interest Disclosure and Whistleblower Protection Act*.

PROCEDURE

1. Details regarding a client, such as status/condition, name, age, circumstance leading to hospitalization and home community, must not be released to the media without written consent from the client unless otherwise authorized by law. The [Release of Client Information](#) form must be used. If the client is unable to provide consent due to age and/or condition, written consent must be obtained from the client/representative.
2. Once a client or designate has consented to release of information to the media, **only** a one-word condition code will be provided to describe the clients status/condition. One-word condition codes are limited to the following four terms:

This is a controlled document. Printed copies of this document are not controlled. Users must view the electronic version of this policy located on Central Health's Intranet to ensure the most up to date policy is consulted.

	TITLE OF THE POLICY: RELEASE OF INFORMATION TO MEDIA	Policy Number: COM-0350
	Policy Tool: Policy	Policy Level: Level I
	Accountability: Corporate Communications and Government Relations	Page 7 of 8

GOOD – vital signs such as pulse, temperature and blood pressure are stable and within normal limits. Patient is conscious and comfortable. Outlook for recovery is good or excellent.


FAIR – vital signs are stable or within normal limits. Patient is conscious but may be uncomfortable. Outlook of recovery is favorable.

SERIOUS – vital signs may be unstable or not within normal limits. Patient is acutely ill and may not be conscious. Outlook for recovery is questionable with a chance of improvement.

CRITICAL – vital signs are unstable or not within normal limits. Patient has major complications and may not be conscious. Outlook for recovery is questionable. Death may be imminent.

3. At any time, the client or their representative can request that no further information be provided to media. This request may, whenever possible, be made in writing.
4. All news releases and other written information for release to the media must be approved by the Director of Corporate Communications and Government Relations and issued by the Corporate Communications and Government Relations Department in consultation with the Central Health privacy representative should occur as needed.
5. Letters to the Editor on behalf of Central Health or by an employee or affiliated individual wishing to identify as an employee of Central Health must be approved by the Director of Corporate Communications and Government Relations issued by Corporate Communications.

This is a controlled document. Printed copies of this document are not controlled. Users must view the electronic version of this policy located on Central Health's Intranet to ensure the most up to date policy is consulted.

	TITLE OF THE POLICY: RELEASE OF INFORMATION TO MEDIA	Policy Number: COM-0350
	Policy Tool: Policy	Policy Level: Level I
	Accountability: Corporate Communications and Government Relations	Page 8 of 8

REFERENCES

Access to Information and Protection of Information Act, Statutes of Newfoundland and Labrador (2015, c. A-1.2). Retrieved from the House of Assembly Newfoundland and Labrador website:

<http://www.assembly.nl.ca/Legislation/sr/statutes/a01-2.htm>

Public Health Protection and Promotion Act, Statutes of Newfoundland and Labrador (2018, P-37.3). Retrieved from the House of Assembly Newfoundland and Labrador website:

<https://www.assembly.nl.ca/Legislation/sr/statutes/p37-3.htm>

Public Interest Disclosure and Whistleblower Protection Act, Statutes of Newfoundland and Labrador (2014, P-37.2). Retrieved from the House of Assembly Newfoundland and Labrador website:

<https://assembly.nl.ca/Legislation/sr/statutes/p37-2.htm>

RELATED RESOURCES

[Office of the Citizens' Representative Website](#)

This is a controlled document. Printed copies of this document are not controlled. Users must view the electronic version of this policy located on Central Health's Intranet to ensure the most up to date policy is consulted.