

Florida Department of Corrections Media Policies

It is the policy of the Florida Department of Corrections (DC) to make known to the public through the news media all relevant information pertaining to operations of the department and facilities. Following is a summary of DC regulations, policies and procedures regarding media access and activities. The complete regulations are found in title 33 of the Florida Administrative Code; which is the official compilation of the administrative rules and regulations of state agencies.

For purposes of the summary media policies listed here, and in accordance with 33.104.101 of the Florida Administrative Code, news media representatives consist of persons whose principal employment is gathering and reporting news for a: Radio or television program whose primary purpose is news reporting for a licensee of the Federal Communications Commission; Newspaper reporting general interest information news and circulated to the public in the community where it is published; News magazine that has a national circulation, is sold by mail subscriptions, or on newsstands to the general public; and National or international news service.

Authorized Release of Information

The data that may be released about an inmate or probationer includes:

- Name
- Age
- Commitment information
- Facility assignments and behavior
- Supervision location
- Conditions of supervision
- Sentencing and release actions
- Visitor Information

DC employee data that may be released includes:

- Name
- Position title
- Age
- Work assignment
- Length of service with the department and/or current division or unit
- Past work assignments
- Role or function in a newsworthy event

Media Access to Facilities (FAC 33.104)

Access to DC facilities - prisons, reception centers, work camps, road prisons, and probation offices - requires prior approval of the warden or circuit administrator and the communications director.

Within a facility, media representatives shall be under the direct supervision of the communications director or his/her designee.

Media representatives cannot enter security housing units, condemned units (death row), the execution chamber, Administrative Segregation or any area currently affected by an emergency without approval of the communications director or designee. There may be limited access to other areas. These may include control booths, guard towers, protective housing units, reception centers, and units housing mentally, seriously or terminally ill inmates.

Media representatives need to supply a full name, date of birth, social security number and driver's license number to process a security clearance for access to an institution. Media representatives from outside the United States need to supply a full name, date of birth and passport information. During an emergency, news media representatives will be restricted to a designated media area.

In order to process security clearance background screen, all media representatives will need to complete, sign and return a Media Access Background Form no less than 1-week prior to entering a DC facility. During an emergency, news media representatives will be restricted to a designated media area.

Writing and Telephoning an Inmate (FAC 33.210.103)

Media representatives may contact any state prison inmate by U.S. Postal mail. It is not necessary for media to notify the Public Affairs Office before communicating with an inmate. Mail from news media representatives is considered privileged mail. Privileged mail may be opened in the presence of the inmate to determine that the correspondence is privileged mail and that it contains no contraband. To ensure prompt processing, mail the letter to the inmate using his/her full name and department number in care of the institution where he/she is incarcerated. To get an inmate's DC number, visit the department's offender search database.

Inmates do not have access to unrestricted telephones and are not permitted to conduct telephone interviews unless the new media representative is on the specific inmates pre-approved telephone calling list.

Media Interviews (FAC 33.104)

Media representatives can interview eligible inmates within the department's facilities. All media representatives must contact the inmate through regular U.S. Postal Mail requesting the interview. Once the inmate responds to the original request for an interview, the media organization should call the public affairs office at 850-488-0420.

The public affairs office will request a faxed copy of the inmate's letter before arranging the interview.

Once the inmate signed letter is received from the media representative, the public affairs office will arrange a date and time for the interview. Interviews are not permitted if the inmate is in disciplinary confinement, classified as close management, has serious psychological problems, is in a hospital or is an infirmary patient. Interviews may also

not be permitted if the warden or senior facility officer believes the interview will impair the security or normal operation of the facility. (FAC 33.104.101)

News media representatives visiting a prison for an interview must be professionally dressed. Inappropriate attire may include miniskirts, see-through blouses, bra-less attire, tank tops, swimsuits, shorts and undershirts.

A photo identification will be required before entering any Florida prison facility. Interviews will be limited to one hour and media crews are limited to three people.

Random interviews of inmates involved in a specific activity or program, shall be limited to the time, areas and segments of the facility population designated by the institution head.

No inmate or staff shall be interviewed against their will.

An inmate's consent is not required in settings like an exercise yard or dining hall where individuals are not singled out or where an inmate's identity is not revealed.

Before such shots are taken however, inmates shall be advised so those who do not want to be recognized may turn away or leave the area.

According to department rule 33-602.231, the use of cameras or recording devices inside an institution or on state property without prior approval from the warden, is prohibited.

In order to process security clearance background screen, all media representatives will need to complete, sign and return a Media Access Background Form no less than 1-week prior to entering a DC facility. During an emergency, news media representatives will be restricted to a designated media area.

Non-News Access to DC Facilities

All non-news motion picture, radio, or television programs produced at any DC facility must have prior approval. For definition purposes, non-news related productions include features, documentaries, news magazine programs, commercials, and pilots for proposed news, public information, religious and entertainment television programs and movies.

The process for approval consideration begins with a request to the Governor's Office of Film and Entertainment. The Governor's Office of Film and Entertainment can be reached at:

Governor's Office of Film and Entertainment
Executive Office of the Governor
The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001
Phone: (850) 410-4765
Toll Free: (877) FLA-FILM

Fax: (850) 410-4770

Florida Department of Corrections Public Affairs Office (850) 488-0420

The Communications Office, located at DC headquarters in Tallahassee, articulates the Department's position on issues, manages crisis communications, serves as a liaison to the media, and releases information to the public. Communications responds to media requests made under Chapter 119 Florida State Statutes. Communications also provides other services to media:

Stock Video Footage and Still Photographs

Communications maintains a library of stock video footage, video news releases and still photographs and makes these available to the media upon request. There is current and archived footage and photographs of correctional facilities and programs, including restricted or limited access areas such as control booths, guard towers, the execution chamber, Death Row, Administrative Segregation and Security Housing Units available in the Public Affairs section of the web site. B-roll prison footage, including the execution chamber and Death Row, is available in a Beta SP and VHS format for \$99.00.

Media Inquiries

Communications researches and responds to inquiries from the media. Facts are gathered as quickly as possible and provided to the inquirer. If the requested facts are not known or are otherwise unavailable, the inquirer shall be informed and the reasons therefore.

Media Access to Inmates Under a Death Sentence (FAC 33.104.202)

Inmates under a sentence of death are permitted to have news media interviews. The interview process is the same as described above. All death row inmate interviews, except those with a pending execution date, are scheduled for Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday at 1:00 p.m. or 2:00 p.m.

During the calendar week of a scheduled execution, all regularly scheduled news media interviews with inmates sentenced to death are cancelled.

Media Access to Scheduled Executions (FAC 33.104.203)

The public affairs office processes all media requests for access to Florida State Prison to cover scheduled executions. Communications also coordinates media requests to witness executions.

When an execution is scheduled, the Public Affairs Office notifies the Florida Association of Broadcasters and the Florida Press Association for media witnesses to the scheduled execution. Each entity provides 5 media representatives to attend; at least 1 broadcast and 1 print representative must be from the county in which the inmate received his/her conviction. The Associated Press and UPI have permanent seats at all executions.

During the calendar week of a scheduled execution, the inmate sentenced to death will be allowed to have one (1) group media interview and one (1) individual interview with a news media representative selected by the inmate, provided the inmate requests the interview in writing.

In the event of a stay of execution after interviews have taken place, additional group media and one-on-one interviews will not be permitted if the execution is rescheduled within two (2) weeks of the original execution date. An additional group media and/or one-on-one interview will be permitted if a new execution date is later than two (2) weeks from the stayed date.