

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

P.O. Box 419064, Rancho Cordova, CA 95741-9064

Reason for this Transmittal

- State Law or Regulation Change
- Federal Law or Regulation Change
- Court Order or Settlement Change
- Clarification requested by One or More Counties
- Initiated by DCSS

February 20, 2002

LCSA LETTER: 02-04

ALL IV-D DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: DESIGNATION OF LCSA PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICERS

The Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) is establishing a Media Relations Program to promote more effective communication with program customers, other stakeholders, and the public. The media (print, radio and television) offers an important vehicle to disseminate accurate, consistent and timely information about child support program services, how to access them and the importance of child support in the lives of children and families.

A first step in developing an effective Media Relations Program is to establish a structure, select appropriate staff, and implement policies and procedures for effective use of this medium to convey important program information.

To assist in this effort, it is requested that you designate a Public Information Officer for your department. This person is responsible for communicating with the news media on topics that may either be part of the child support outreach program effort or responding to media inquiries and requests for information of media contacts.

To assist you in making your selection, DCSS is providing suggested minimum qualifications and skills desired of persons serving in this PIO role. Selecting a Public Information Officer does not necessarily mean creation of a new position. DCSS will defer to the judgment of each Director to determine how they want to handle this role. For example some Directors have suggested the duties should be divided by reactive responses and proactive initiation.

If your department has already selected a Public Information Officer, please provide that person's name and contact information to this office. If your department does not have a Public Information Officer, please designate one and provide that person's contact information within 30 days of receipt of this letter.



DO YOUR PART TO HELP CALIFORNIA SAVE ENERGY
For energy saving tips, visit the DCSS website at
www.childsup.cahwnet.gov

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If you have any questions or concerns regarding this matter, please contact me at:
(916) 464-5188, Fax (916) 464-5495 or e-mail: Mike.Botula@dcss.ca.gov

Sincerely,

MIKE BOTULA
Assistant Director for Office of Public Affairs

attachments

California Department of Child Support Services

LCSA Public Information Officer (PIO)

The Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) recently asked each local child support agency (LCSA) to designate a Public Information Officer (PIO). The following provides a description of the role and expectations for the LCSA PIO function. This information is intended to be useful to LCSA Directors in determining how best to establish this function within their local agency, as well as articulating the desired knowledge, skills and abilities of persons serving in this function. The LCSA PIO function is presented within the context of the proposed DCSS Media Relations Program.

Purpose of PIO Function

The purpose of the LCSA PIO function is twofold: (1) to respond accurately and timely to inquiries from the media, and (2) to play an important role in using the media (print, television and radio) in implementation of local outreach programs targeted to child support program customers, stakeholders and the general public. Thus, it is envisioned that the PIO function will encompass both reactive and proactive media relations.

More specifically, the LCSA PIO is expected to: (1) be the central point of contact within the LCSA for media inquiries and response; (2) design and implement a local level structure to respond accurately and timely to requests for information from the media; (3) support as appropriate implementation of local outreach efforts using the media as the vehicle for dissemination of information; (4) provide expertise and counsel relative to media relations and communication techniques; and (5) be the primary point of contact to communicate and coordinate with DCSS relative to implementation of the Media Relations Program.

While it is preferable for all media contacts – reactive and proactive -- to be handled by a designated PIO, it is recognized that some LCSA directors may prefer to separate these activities. DCSS will work with each LCSA director to establish the desired local protocol that meets the intent of the PIO function, i.e., to handle accurately and timely all media inquiries.

Degree of Sensitivity and Reporting Relationship

Due to the highly visible, potentially sensitive and important nature of this function, it is expected that the PIO operate under the direction of the LCSA Director.

Examples of Typical PIO Duties:

- Serving as the media relation's subject matter expert (SME) in planning, designing, developing, and implementing an LCSA media relations program. In this SME capacity, serves as the chief internal departmental media relations adviser to the LCSA director.
- Coordinating with and assisting DCSS in development and operation of a statewide child support Media Relations Program.

- Preparing materials for release to the media including press releases, editorial opinions, letters to the editor, Public Service Announcements, and presentations for public meetings.
- Providing accurate and timely information to news media representatives to prepare their stories for publication or broadcast.
- Arranging radio and television appearances for department personnel and preparing related materials for their use.

Desirable Knowledge, Skills and Abilities

It is desirable for the LCSA PIO to have knowledge of the principles and techniques of effective public communications, including the techniques of preparing, producing and disseminating information, utilizing all major media of communication mediums including print, radio and television. This may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Formal training in communications, public relations, marketing or a closely related field and/or experience or equivalent career experience in the public communications field;
- Knowledge of the principles and techniques of establishing and maintaining good relations with news media;
- Knowledge of the principles and techniques of preparing news releases and helping in the planning of press conferences and other media-related projects, and;
- Knowledge of the methods and techniques used in evaluating public information needs; and,
- Skills and abilities to assist in the coordination of effective public information programs, dealing with media inquiries, and representing the LCSA as spokesperson.