



## Policy and Procedure # 689

### Media Policy

Approval: \_\_\_\_\_ Effective Date: 5/10/24

#### POLICY:

The executive director of Exceptional Foresters, Inc. (EFI) serves as the official spokesperson and conveys the official position on issues of general company-wide impact or significance or situations that are of a particularly controversial or sensitive nature. Inquiries from the media about such issues should be referred to the executive director.

Depending on the specific circumstances, the executive director may designate another administrator to serve as spokesperson on a particular issue.

#### PROCEDURE:

1. Employees that receive requests from the media regarding their employment, EFI, or clients should refer the inquiry to their supervisor.
2. Notify your supervisor about negative occurrences that are likely to rise to the level of a news story.
3. Positive media can be beneficial, ideas for articles or pieces that would positively portray EFI, its work or the community should also be directed to your supervisor.
4. Guidelines for communicating with the media:
  - a. Obtain the name of the person requesting information, the media organization and, if available, the anticipated time of release of information in print or broadcast. This information should be included when the notification is made to your supervisor.
  - b. The best approach with the media is to be prompt, helpful and honest. All contacts from the media should be returned as soon as possible, in deference to reporters' deadlines. At the most, a call should be returned within a half-day. If that is not possible, an alternate employee (if appropriate) or supervisor should be asked to handle the call.
  - c. Make sure you understand each question from the media before answering. If you cannot answer the question, or are uncomfortable providing a response, take the reporter's number and advise him/her that someone who can provide the information will contact him/her as soon as possible. Then follow-up by contacting your supervisor.
  - d. Do not offer speculations or gossip. Do not answer a reporter's question with "no comment." Do not be condescending or underestimate the reporter's intelligence, but make sure the reporter understands your responses. Provide your phone number and/or e-mail address for follow-up questions.
  - e. Remember that in responding to the media, you can be seen as representing and speaking for EFI. Personal opinions should be clearly and carefully identified as such.



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- f. Issues that should not be discussed with reporters are 1) legal issues, 2) personnel issues, 3) questions that involve EFI integrity, such as ethics or issues that may result in harm to others, or 4) a crisis or emergency. Refer all such inquiries to the executive director.
  - g. Any media inquiries that involve information about specific clients should be directed to the executive director. Such inquiries will be handled in strict compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) This federal law protects the confidentiality of clients.
  - h. Any media inquiries regarding EFI staff should be referred to the Human Resources Department. Only public information may be provided without the employee's written approval. Public information is the following: verification of employment, name of job title/position, employment starting date.
5. Crisis communications have a lasting impact on EFI's reputation and public support. How well we convey our message to the public greatly depends on what is reported to the news media. This is especially true in a crisis. Because of the emotions that usually accompany crises, images formed from crisis reporting are especially important in shaping long-lasting public impressions of EFI.