

| <b>VAN BUREN COUNTY COURTS<br/>POLICY: IN-1700-p</b>        |                                     |                        |
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| <b>SUBJECT:</b> INTERVIEW / MEDIA REQUESTS & PRESS RELEASES | <b>SECTION:</b> INTERDEPARTMENTAL   | <b>DATE:</b> 8/29/14   |
| <b>PREPARED BY:</b> Frank Hardester                         | <b>NUMBER:</b> <del>IN-1700-p</del> | <b>SUPERSEDES:</b> n/a |

Renumbered to "Policy 4.001" on 9/16/20

**REFERENCES:** MCR 3.215(D)(4); MCR 6.006; MCR 8.109(B); MCR 8.110(C)(2)(e); Administrative Order 1989-1; Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 3(A)(6), (7)

**DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS:** None.

**BACKGROUND:** The media, agencies and general public periodically request interviews with court staff concerning cases, procedures, statistics and other matters concerning the courts. Additionally, with increased use of video and camera equipment by media and the general public, it is necessary to establish a policy governing its usage when interviewing court staff. On its own initiative, the court may have official announcements that need to be provided to the public in the form of a press release. Guidelines are needed for press releases and for court staff to follow upon receiving an interview request.

**POLICY STATEMENT:**

- A. Interviews of court staff, pertaining to court matters, may be conducted only upon approval of the Chief Judge. Pursuant to the Code of Judicial Conduct, the judges and staff will abstain from public comment about a pending or impending proceeding. This does not prohibit a judge, or their staff at the judge's direction, from making public statements in the course of official duties or from explaining for public information the procedures of the court or the judge's holdings or actions. Court staff may respond to routine inquires about the court schedule and/or the status of a case.
- B. Use of video, camera, cell phone or other filming equipment is prohibited when interviewing court staff unless a written request is submitted to and approved by the Chief Judge.
- C. Volunteers and interns are prohibited from discussing cases with the media.
- D. Press releases from the court must be pre-approved by the Chief Judge.

**EXCEPTIONS:**

- A. This policy does not affect film or electronic media coverage of court proceedings controlled by Administrative Order 1989-1; mechanical recording of court proceedings controlled by MCR 8.109(B); use of electronic equipment controlled by MCR 6.006; electronically recorded proceedings of referee hearings controlled by MCR 3.215(D)(4).

**PROCEDURES:**

- A. Any party requesting to film or interview an employee of Van Buren County Courts must make the request in writing to the Chief Judge prior to commencement of the interview. The request must include the name of the court employee, subject of the interview, date of the interview, the type of recording equipment that will be used and the reason for the interview.

1. Upon receipt of the written request, the Chief Judge will review the request and indicate: "Approved" or "Denied" on the request.
  2. If approved, the Chief Judge will designate who will be interviewed if it is someone other than the Chief Judge.
  3. The Chief Judge may delegate any responsibility listed in this policy to the Presiding Judge of each court.
- B. After approval from the supervisor/administrator, any employee of the Van Buren County Courts may prepare a draft press release. Prior to dissemination and official release it must be approved by the Chief Judge.
1. Unless designated otherwise, the media contact on the release will be the Chief Judge.
  2. Once drafted and approved by the supervisor/administrator, the administrator will present the press release to the Chief Judge for approval.
  3. Upon approval from the Chief Judge, the administrator will arrange for the dissemination of the release.

FORMS USED:

VBC-1700 Media Request to Interview  
VBC-1701 Press Release

APPROVAL:

8/29/2014 at Judge's Meeting

Date: 9/3/2014

  
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Frank D. Willis, Chief Judge