



# KENOSHA PUBLIC LIBRARY

## **MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY**

*The Board of Trustees of the Kenosha Public Library adopts and makes public the following written policies.*

### **I. PURPOSE**

The Kenosha Public Library (herein called the “Library”) intends to manage media communication with its patrons, businesses, and community members by engaging in a proactive communications program. This program recognizes that one of the most effective ways to communicate Library policies and activities to the community is by working in partnership with the news media.

### **II. POLICY**

The Library Director is the final authority for the Library’s media communications, with the exception of common or routine programming and events promotion. All Library employees should notify the Library Director or designee about any non-routine media inquiry.

- A.** Inquiries from the news media are given high priority by the Kenosha Public Library. Requests for information should be responded to as effectively and efficiently as possible. If designated to respond, the Library employee should make every effort to ensure that all information released is accurate.
- B.** It is important that employees respond to the Library Director as soon as possible when he/she requests that a department spokesperson respond to the media or provide the Director with information for the media. Specific guidelines for responding to media requests follow.

### **III. LIBRARY SPOKESPERSONS**

**A.** Unless otherwise authorized, the Library’s spokespersons are:

- 1) The Library Director
- 2) The Division Head for Public Services/Support Services
- 3) Department Heads

**B.** Exceptions regarding departmental spokesperson may be made at the discretion of the Department Head with approval of the Library Director.

- 1) Misdirected media requests shall be referred to the affected department.

- 2) Never attempt to respond as the spokesperson for another department, even if peripherally involved.

#### **IV. ROUTINE MEDIA INQUIRIES**

- A. Any media inquiries received by Library staff should be referred immediately to the Department Head or Division Head for Public Services/Support Services
- B. An appropriate response to the media is, *“I’m sorry I don’t have the full information regarding that issue. I will forward your request to my Department Head, who will respond to you as soon as he/she is available.”* Staff should obtain the reporter’s name, phone number or cell phone number, topic of the story, and the deadline.

#### **V. SENSITIVE OR CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES**

- A. All television, radio, newspaper, or other media inquiries regarding sensitive or controversial issues should always be referred immediately to the employee’s Department Head or the Division Head for Public Services/Support Services, who will contact the Library Director and coordinate a response.
- B. The Division Head for Public Services/Support Services will designate a spokesperson. The following are examples of potentially sensitive issues, which should be reported immediately to the Library Director or the Division Head for Public Services/Support Services:
  - 1) Disruption in Library services/sites due to physical site problems (broken water main, sewer backup, AC failure), reports of infestation (bed bugs, lice), or power failures.
  - 2) Personnel problems such as suspensions, employee work stoppages, or resignations of key individuals.
  - 3) Emergencies such as fires, explosions, or accidents that result in damage to Library or private property, or injury or death to Library personnel.
  - 4) Industrial accidents that involve injury or death to contractor’s employees or vendors doing business with the Library.
  - 5) Accidents on Library property resulting in injury or death to citizens, such as a fall in a Library building.
  - 6) Pending or resolved litigation.
  - 7) Incidents involving Library personnel and injury or death such as:
    - a. Work vehicle traffic accident.
    - b. Allegations of a criminal nature.

#### **VI. LITIGATION, PERSONNEL, AND ELECTION ISSUES:**

- A. Generally, the business conducted by the Library is public, and therefore, is public information. Inquiries regarding pending litigation, matters involving a significant exposure

to litigation, and certain personnel-related information are exceptions. Contact the Library Director regarding public information or Open Records requests.

- B. Inquiries regarding pending litigation or exposure to litigation should be referred to the Library Director.
- C. Inquiries regarding personnel-related information should be referred to the Library Director or the Head of Administrative Services.
- D. Inquiries regarding election and campaign issues should be referred to the Library Director or the City Clerk.
- E. If it appears that other Library staff are likely to be interviewed as part of the same story, a post-interview briefing may be in order. Allow other staff members to be informed what was covered in order to avoid conflicting statements.

## VII. PERSONAL POINT OF VIEW:

- A. It is recognized that all employees have the right to their personal point of view regarding any issue. However, personal points of view may conflict with official Library policy.
- B. Library employees who write letters to the editor of any newspaper may not use official Library stationery. If an employee chooses to identify himself or herself as a Library employee in any personal letter or email to the editor, he/she must include a statement that the views expressed do not represent the view of the Kenosha Public Library. The correspondence must clearly explain that it is the employee's personally held opinion.
- C. Similar disclaimers must be given if an employee addresses a public meeting, participates in a radio talk show, or is interviewed for a radio or television program, unless the employee is officially representing the Library at the direction of the Library Director.
- D. Employees who are representing the Library in any of the above formats must identify themselves as an official spokesperson for the Library. No employee shall speak as an official representative of a different Library department than their own without the prior approval of that department.

## VIII. GENERAL OR ROUTINE ISSUES:

- A. **Broadcast Media:** Calls from broadcast media (TV and Radio) should always be referred immediately to the employee's Department Head or the Division Head for Public Services/Support Services. That management representative will contact the Library Director and coordinate a response including designating a spokesperson.
- B. **Local Print Media:** Each Department Head or the Division Head for Public Services/Support Services may handle calls from local print media regarding most routine department issues and programs. When appropriate, the Department Head or Division Head for Public Services/Support Services may designate an employee in their

department to respond to specific questions from print media. The Library Director should be informed of these media requests, including the reporter's name and topic, either before or immediately following interviews.

**IX. LIBRARY-INITIATED INFORMATION:**

- A.** Proactive media contact is initiated through the Library Director and the Communications Specialist. This includes issuing non-routine press releases and media advisories, and personal contacts with reporters and editors for non-routine coverage.
- B.** Departments seeking publicity for events or activities should use the Marketing Request Form following the requested time frames to ensure the best media coverage of their activities. Staff desiring routine press release coverage of programs or events should provide a written program or event description to the Communications Specialist no later than 3 weeks prior to the date of the program or event. All events submitted for the tri-yearly event calendar will automatically receive a press release with no further action required from programming staff. Departments should not initiate non-routine news media contacts before notifying the Library Director.

**X. CRISIS OR EMERGENCY ISSUES:**

- A.** During a crisis or major emergency (like flood, tornado, or weather related closing), the Library Director will be or will designate a main point of contact for the media.
- B.** Personnel who may be the first to discover an emergency condition should first notify the appropriate rescue personnel if needed, then the appropriate Department Head/Division Head for Public Services/Support Services. The Library Director should be informed as soon as it is feasible.