

Communication Policy & Procedures

Approved December 2007

In an effort to effectively communicate internally and externally, and to position the CBA as a professional and beneficial organization in the community, the CBA will:

Internal communication:

- For *internal* messages, the association president will review and approve copy to be sent to members except for routine staff-generated materials (CLE announcements, Committee notices, E-news, the *CBA Report*). Preparing these messages, in concert with the Director of Communications who handles the logistics of the letter, e-mail or other publication, **MAY** include the following:
 - Discussion with the director of communications on developing the key messages on a topic
 - Discussion with other members of the executive committee for input on the content of the message
 - Discussion with the executive director for input on the content of the message and background material

Utilize One Spokesperson:

- The CBA will use one consistent spokesperson.
 - The spokesperson will always be the association president *unless* the current president, as in the case of a judge, opts to appoint a designee.
- The only exception will be in grievance matters in which case, since so little public information is available, staff will provide timelines, procedures, rules, etc., to the media.
- In the role of *external* spokesperson, the president will ensure that prior to a media interview he/she has prepared answers including the organization's key messages. Preparing for this interview **SHOULD** include the following:
 - Discussion with the director of communications who can assist in developing the key messages on a topic, rehearse the media conversation and otherwise prepare background information for the spokesperson. In the event the director of communications is unavailable, the spokesperson will discuss the matter with the executive director and/or any relevant staff.

It may also include the following:

- Discussion with other members of the executive committee for input on the content of the message.
- Discussion with the executive director for input on the content of the message and background material.
- The spokesperson shall remain available to the media at all times. If the spokesperson is not available, then he or she will assign another person to speak on the CBA's behalf and will inform the director of communications.

Communication Policy & Procedures (continued)

When Relating to the Media, the CBA's Spokesperson Will:

Know The Key Messages:

- The CBA will always accommodate requests and inquiries from the media.
- Simply answering questions will allow the media to control the message.
- The spokesperson should stick as closely as possible to the messages and should not be afraid of silence.
- The spokesperson should convey the message in answer to a question, then stop.
- The spokesperson should be aware of leading questions and stick to the key messages. Rehearsal with the director of communications can enable the spokesperson to be more comfortable with the key messages.
- All inquiries should be channeled through the Communications department prior to the interview in order to determine the appropriate messages.
 - If the reporter calls for an interview an appropriate response from CBA members and staff would be, "Thank you for your call. We absolutely want to accommodate your request." Tell the reporter the staff/member will get back to them with the name and number of the spokesperson.
 - If time is needed to develop the key messages, then the response to the reporter would be: "Thank you for your call. I absolutely want to answer your questions and help any way that I can. What is your deadline? May I call you back at a more convenient time?"

Never Talk "Off The Record"

- The CBA should never talk off the record. There is no reason to do so as "off the record" means that the information given to the reporter cannot be used at all. An organization devoted to supporting justice and education would not share information that cannot be used by the reporter. For clarification, here are the terms that reporters use and what they mean:
 - "Anonymity" requires a contract and there can be litigation that results from it.
 - "Deep background" means that a journalist will not identify the source, but will use the information to find another means of reporting the story.
 - "Off the record" means that information cannot be used at all.

Know Your Audience

- The CBA should always get as much information on the reporter and the media outlet as possible. Ask questions like "How did you hear about?" or "Who else will you be interviewing?" If the reporter originally calls the executive director or the communications director, then these questions may be addressed at that time. After being filled in by the staff member, this allows the spokesperson to focus on the interview itself.

Always Remain Positive

- The CBA is a positive organization helping the community. All key messages should be positive.
- If the CBA spokesperson disagrees with the reporter it is okay to do it firmly but with professional conviction. Avoid criticism of a person, a policy, a law, etc., unless it is a board-approved position.
- Present the facts clearly.
- The CBA spokesperson should always avoid rudeness under any circumstance.
- Be detached from the reporter. The relationship with the press is not adversarial nor is it friendly. It is a business relationship and it is not personal.

Always Control The Interview

- The spokesperson should always tell truth.
- It is always okay to say nothing.
- Repeat the key messages more than once if needed.
- It is important for the CBA spokesperson to remain cool, calm and polite during the interview.
- It is acceptable for the spokesperson to answer, "I don't know but I will find out."
- The spokesperson NEVER says "No Comment."
- The spokesperson may offer help in finding the answer or refer the question to someone else.