



**TEXAS BOARD  
OF  
PARDONS AND PAROLES**

**Number: BPP-DIR. 141.352**

**Date: September 1, 2017**

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**Supersedes: August 29, 2012**

## **BOARD DIRECTIVE**

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**SUBJECT: PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE POLICY**

**PURPOSE:** To provide guidance and instructions to Board Members, Parole Commissioners and agency staff concerning the services provided by the Public Information Office.

**AUTHORITY:** Texas Government Code Sections 441.183, 441.184, 441.185, 441.186 and 441.187; Texas Government Code Chapter 552; Texas Government Code Section 508.313; Texas Administrative Code Title V, Part VI, Chapter 141, Sections 141.71 and 141.72

**DISCUSSION:** The Public Information Director is employed by the Presiding Officer (Chair) and supervised by the Board Administrator. As appointed by the Chair, the Public Information Director is the spokespersons, public information coordinator and records management officer for the Board of Pardons and Paroles (Board). The duties of the Public Information Director or designee include but are not limited to the following:

- A. Responding to inquiries from the news media and other organizations.
- B. Administration of the duties and responsibilities of the Chair pursuant to Texas Government Code Chapter 552 and the Board's records management program pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 441.184.
- C. Supervision of the communication's supervisor, ombudsman, technical writer and administrative staff.
- D. Coordination of the quarterly board meetings required by Texas Government Code Section 508.047.
- E. Preparation of statistical reports, publications for crime victims, family members, public and state agencies. Preparation of the annual report on parole guidelines pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 508.1445.

**POLICY:** The Public Information Office (PIO) shall respond to public information requests and manage the agency's records in accordance with statutory

requirements; and shall provide quality communication services in fulfilling the Board's mission.

## **PROCEDURES:**

### I. Contact by a Member of the News Media

- A. General Information - The Public Information Director (Director) is the spokesperson for the Board. After consultation with the Chair or the Board Administrator, the Director will respond to all news media inquiries, except those requests to the Chair, Board Members or Parole Commissioners to which they wish to respond.
- B. Media Phone or Email Contact - When a Board Member or employee is contacted by the news media, the news media contact should be referred immediately to the Director and, in the absence of the Director, the Board Administrator. The Director will consult with the Chair or Board Administrator to determine the most appropriate response and the appropriate person to respond to the news media.
- C. Media In-Person Contact - In the event that a member of the news media shows up at an office, hearing or other Board location or event, the Director should be contacted immediately. The Director will contact the Chair or Board Administrator for instructions on how to proceed.
- D. Potential News Media Interest - If a Board Members, Parole Commissioners or Hearing Officer anticipates potential news media interest in a particular parole related matter, the Board Member, Parole Commissioner or Hearing Officer should report that expected interest to their immediate supervisor and the Director. After consultation with the Chair or Board Administrator, the Director will respond to the inquiry. The Director, in responding to news media inquiries, will inform the original contact of the disposition of the inquiry.

### II. Public Information Requests

- A. The Director is the Public Information Coordinator for the Board. The Director or his designee is responsible for responding to all public information requests.
- B. The Director or designee oversees and tracks all responses to official "Open Records" requests for public information. All requests for official records or information should be forwarded to the Director or the Ombudsman on the day of receipt via fax and the original should be sent via truck mail. All requests should be in writing.
- C. The Director, Ombudsman or communications staff may respond to routine "Open Records" requests. If any question arises about whether or not the requested information may be released as an Open Record request, the Director

will contact the General Counsel or Assistant General Counsel, who may or may not request an opinion from the Attorney General to maintain the confidentiality of a record.

1. The following information shall be released upon request to the general public in accordance with Board Rule 141.71:
  - a. Minutes of the board and parole panels;
  - b. The parole status of an offender;
  - c. Final decisions relating to parole, pardons and clemency, and
  - d. General information regarding the parole decision-making process.
2. If a request is received for public information identifiable and readily available on the Board's website, the requestor may be referred to the exact Internet location or uniform resource locator (URL) address to the Board's website and accessible to the public. If the requestor does not have access to the internet or prefers a manner other than access through the URL, the Board must supply the information in the manner required by statute for information not maintained on the Board's website.
3. If the requestor requests a copy of the record of a preliminary or revocation hearing, sex offender condition hearing, or statistical or general information concerning the parole and mandatory supervision program and system, the requestor should be referred to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice as the official custodian of all electronic and paper records for offenders eligible for parole or mandatory supervision.

### III. Records Management Responsibilities

- A. The Director is the Records Management Officer for the Board and is specifically responsible for the following:
  1. Administering the records management program established by Texas Government Code Section 441.183;
  2. Assisting the Chair in fulfilling all the duties and responsibilities of the Texas Government Code Chapter 441, Subchapter L, Preservation and Management of State Records and Other Historical Resources;
  3. Disseminating to Board personnel information concerning state laws, administrative rules, and agency policies and procedures relating to the management of state records.

- B. The Director is responsible for designating a coordinator for all Board offices and shall ensure all coordinators are trained on records management and disposition.

IV. Research and Development of Public Information

- A. The following officers or employees are entitled to request public information assistance. Board employees not included in this listing should follow their chain-of-command to request public information support.

1. Chair;
2. Board Members;
3. Parole Commissioners;
4. Board Administrator and any officers or employees who reports directly to the Board Administrator;
5. General Counsel and any employees who report directly to the General Counsel; and
6. Any other particular officers or employees authorized by the Chair.

- B. The Director shall prepare information of public interest describing the functions of the board, making the information available to the public and appropriate state agencies by producing publications and maintaining information on the website for the Board.

**SIGNED THIS, THE 20<sup>th</sup> DAY OF JULY, 2017.**

**DAVID GUTIÉRREZ, PRESIDING OFFICER (CHAIR)**

*\*Signature on file.*