



# **POLICY STATEMENT**

Communications  
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Director

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## Overview

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### Background

Due to the nature and mission of the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA or the Agency), CSOSA personnel are often approached by individuals and entities from all levels of government, media outlets, and elected or appointed officials, seeking information regarding the Agency and the population it serves.

The purpose of this policy is to establish the principles governing:

- The Communications Unit within the Office of the Director in producing and managing internal and external communications to promote broad public recognition and support of the Agency and its mission.
  - The official internal and external communications of CSOSA personnel regarding contacts with and inquiries from the media and officials.
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### Summary of Changes

- Updated authorities and references section.
  - Addition of Section 508 specific language under principles.
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### Coverage

This Policy Statement applies to all CSOSA personnel, including employees, contractors, and interns.

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### Authorities

- Section 11232 (b)(1), § 11232(b)(2), § 11233(b)(2)(B) of the National Capital Revitalization and Self-Government Improvement Act of 1997 (“Revitalization Act”), Pub. Law 105-33, 111 Stat. 712, D.C. Code § 24-132(b)(1), § 24-132(b)(2), § 24-133(b)(2)(B) (1996 Repl., 1999 Supp.)
  - D.C. Code § 24-133(b)(2)(B) (1996 Rep., 1999 Supp.)
  - 36 C.F.R. Part 1194-Information and Communication Technology Standards and Guidelines
  - [M-24-08 Strengthening Digital Accessibility and the Management of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act](#)
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## Overview, Continued

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### References

- [Plain Writing Act of 2010](#)
  - [Freedom of Information Act](#)
  - M-24-08 Strengthening Digital Accessibility and the Management of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act
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### Administrator

The Office of the Director (OD) is responsible for the contents of this policy.

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### Policy Disclaimer

Nothing in this policy is intended to or should in any way infringe upon the rights of an employee to be protected under the Whistleblower Protection Act or any other statute or regulation designed to protect the rights of a federal employee.

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## Policy

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### Principles

The Communications Unit produces and manages internal and external Agency communications by:

- Disseminating clear and consistent messages about the Agency's mission and activities to CSOSA staff, government agencies, the media, the public, and other stakeholders.
  - Serving as the point of contact through which accurate and consistent information about the Agency is distributed, including internal and external communications.
  - Reviewing and approving both internal communications for Agency-wide distribution and external communications.
  - Ensuring that information provided to the media and other stakeholders is accurate and delivered promptly.
  - Ensuring that the agency's official written and visual content conforms to the agency's approved graphical, visual, and editorial standards, including, but not limited to, Plain Writing principles, accessibility standards, and branding guidelines
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### Elected and Appointed Officials

- Only the Agency Director and the Director's designees are authorized to communicate with elected or appointed officials and their staff regarding official Agency business. For communications necessary to carry out the Agency's mission, this Policy Statement excludes staff of the United States Parole Commission (USPC), the District of Columbia Superior Court (DCSC), Bureau of Prisons (BOP), Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), and Pretrial Services Agency (PSA) due to their routine case-related interactions with CSOSA employees.
  - CSOSA personnel must seek review and approval from the OD:
    - Before providing a written or verbal statement on behalf of the Agency responding to an elected or appointed official's inquiry.
    - To engage with local, state, and federal elected or appointed officials and their staff on matters concerning Agency business.
  - Only the Agency Director and the Director's designees are authorized to extend a formal invitation on behalf of the Agency to elected or appointed officials and their staff to attend any CSOSA sponsored or co-sponsored event, program, or observance. CSOSA personnel must submit a formal request to the OD before extending an invitation to an elected or appointed official and/or their staff.
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## Policy, Continued

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- Media Inquiries** CSOSA personnel must:
- Report any media contact or request from an elected or appointed official about a CSOSA matter to the Director of CSOSA through the Communications Unit.
  - Obtain approval from the Director of CSOSA through the Communications Unit before speaking or corresponding with a member of the media or a media outlet about any matter related to the Agency's official business.
  - Obtain approval from the Director of CSOSA through the Communications Unit before responding to inquiries from elected or appointed officials regarding high-profile cases, incidents, and issues, such as those cases, incidents, and issues that have attracted or reasonably appear to have the potential to attract media or public attention.

**Employees as Private Citizens:**

An off-duty employee, as a private citizen, is not prohibited from expressing their personal views to the media, as long as the employee:

- Advises the media that they are expressing their own personal views and not that of the Agency and are not acting in their official capacity;
- Makes it clear to the media that they are not representing CSOSA;
- Does not disclose sensitive or confidential information acquired in the performance of their official duties with CSOSA;
- Refrains from using Agency insignia or wearing attire bearing the Agency's insignia while expressing their personal views; and
- Does not identify as a CSOSA employee when on social media and making political or otherwise sensitive commentary.

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**Disciplinary  
Action**

Failure to adhere to this policy may result in disciplinary action.

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## Definitions

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**Branding** Establishing a distinct visual identity for the Agency across various media and platforms. A strong visual identity enhances the community’s recognition and support of the Agency and its mission. Elements such as the Agency seal, typography, color scheme, and graphical choices are all essential to establishing a consistent brand identity.

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**CSOSA Personnel** Within this Policy Statement, the term “CSOSA Personnel” includes employees, contractors, and interns.

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**Elected and Appointed Officials** Within this Policy Statement, the term “elected and appointed officials” includes, but is not limited to, executives of Federal and District Government agencies, members of Congress, the judiciary, members of the Council of the District of Columbia (D.C.) and D.C. Advisory Neighborhood Commission and the immediate staff of these officials.

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**Public/External Communications** Digital, print, and oral content that will be consumed by an audience that includes individuals not employed by CSOSA. Additionally, the content is, purports to be, or gives the impression that it is official or Agency-sanctioned. This digital, print or oral content includes, but is not limited to, interviews, email messages, presentations, speeches, flyers, written reports, photos/videos, websites, social media postings, newsletters, and letters.

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**External Presentation** Presentations made to an audience that includes individuals who are not employed by CSOSA. External presentations include those made at a conference, event, or meeting sponsored by an entity other than CSOSA, as well as, conferences, events, or meetings hosted by CSOSA, whether held on or off CSOSA premises, where any individual who is not employed by the Agency is in attendance. Presentations include, but are not limited to, those created in Microsoft PowerPoint, Prezi, or similar software.

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## Definitions, Continued

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**Internal Communications**

Comprised of all-digital, oral and print content to be widely distributed (to 50% or more of Agency employees) within the Agency. Digital and print content includes, but is not limited to, newsletters, periodicals, flyers, and email messages.

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**Media**

Within this Policy Statement, the term “media” refers to news media that deliver news to the general public or a target public.

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**Plain Writing**

Also referred to as “plain language,” is a style of writing designed to ensure the reader understands the message as quickly, easily, and thoroughly as possible. Plain writing strives to be easy to read, understand, and use. Plain writing is concise and avoids the use of jargon. Communicating in this manner does not mean oversimplifying concepts, but instead presenting the information in a way that makes it easier to understand and use by a wider audience.

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**Public Relations**

The Agency’s work toward causing stakeholders, including the media, to have understanding for and goodwill toward the Agency.

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**Strategic Communications**

Policymaking and guidance to be disseminated within the Agency and between the Agency and external stakeholders. The policymaking and guidance provide a structured and systematic process to engage key audiences to create, strengthen, and preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of the Agency’s mission, goals, guiding principles, and priorities through consistent and coordinated programming and messaging.

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## Roles and Responsibilities

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### **CSOSA Personnel**

- Notify the OD's Communications Unit immediately of any media contacts or inquiries.
  - Adhere to procedures established by the OD regarding internal and external communications.
  - Coordinate official communications-related requests through their chain of command (supervisor, associate director, etc.) for review and approval before sending it to the OD for final review and approval, and adhere to established procedures for the review of presentations.
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### **Director of Communications**

- Oversees public communication activities, including but not limited to media relations, websites, use of social media, publications, speeches, briefings, etc.
  - Maintains effective relations with the media, governmental entities, and other stakeholders.
  - Keeps Senior Executive Leadership Team (SELT) apprised of press inquiries, as appropriate.
  - Ensures that pertinent information regarding Agency activities is shared with the media promptly when appropriate.
  - Oversees internal communication activities, including but not limited to the official Agency newsletter and dissemination of Agency-wide communications.
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### **Senior Executive Leadership Team (SELT)**

- Ensure their staff is informed about the Agency's communication policies and related procedures.
  - Notify the Director of Communications about media inquiries.
  - Inform the Communications Unit about notable and newsworthy developments within their unit.
  - Anticipate, as much as possible, issues that could evoke controversy, including high-profile cases, and keep the Communications Unit informed so that they may plan and execute appropriate communication strategies.
  - Review and approve official communications-related requests from unit employees before sending the request to the OD for final review and approval.
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## **Roles and Responsibilities, Continued**

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**Communications  
Unit**

- Provides overall leadership and coordination for public relations and communications activities.
  - Oversees the development and dissemination of external communications strategies, tactics, and products concerning issues of Agency interest or importance.
  - Advises executives and staff on a range of communications-related issues.
  - Provides guidance and has final authority on the development and use of social media, the Intranet, and Website content.
  - Develops and implements internal communications strategies and products.
  - Generates and manages the content on the Agency's official social media platforms.
  - Develops and advises regarding strategic communications, as needed.
  - Serves as a point of contact for external Agency inquiries from stakeholders, including the media.
  - Includes the Agency's designated senior official on Plain Writing.
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