

Public Information & Communication

THE PIO CRASH COUSE

Denise Derrer Spears,
Public Information Director



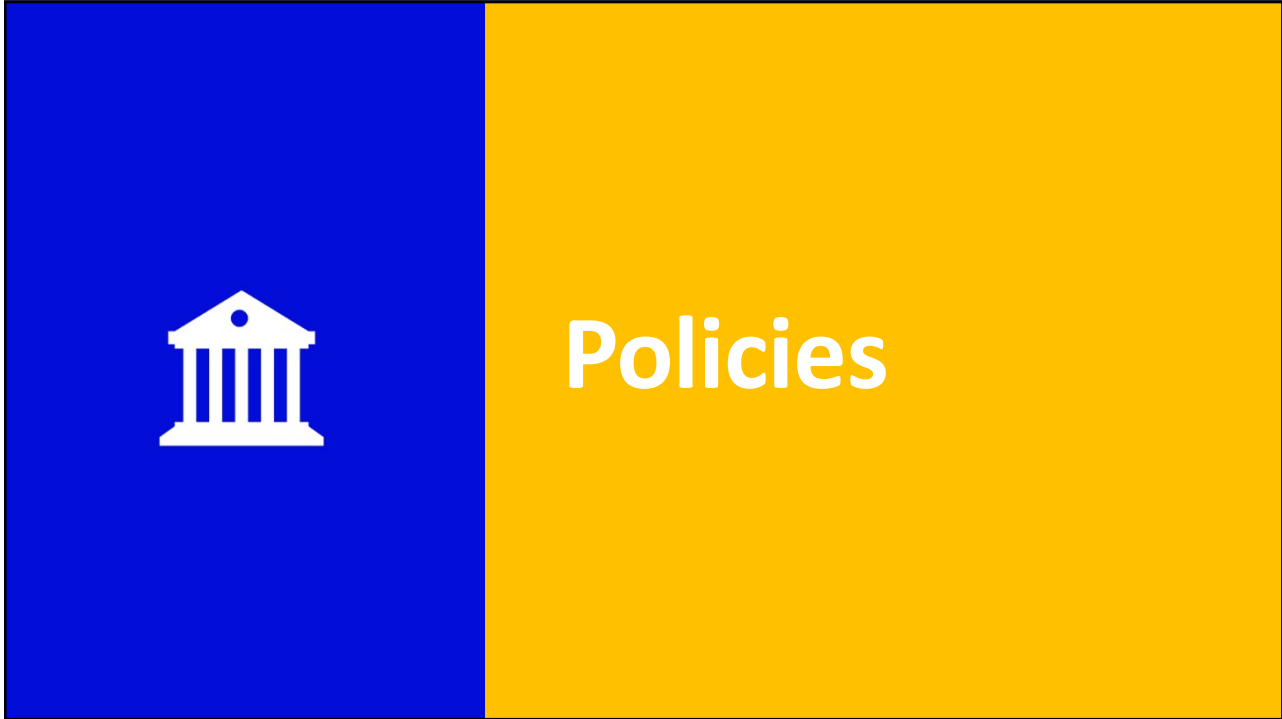
1

The Public Information Crash Course



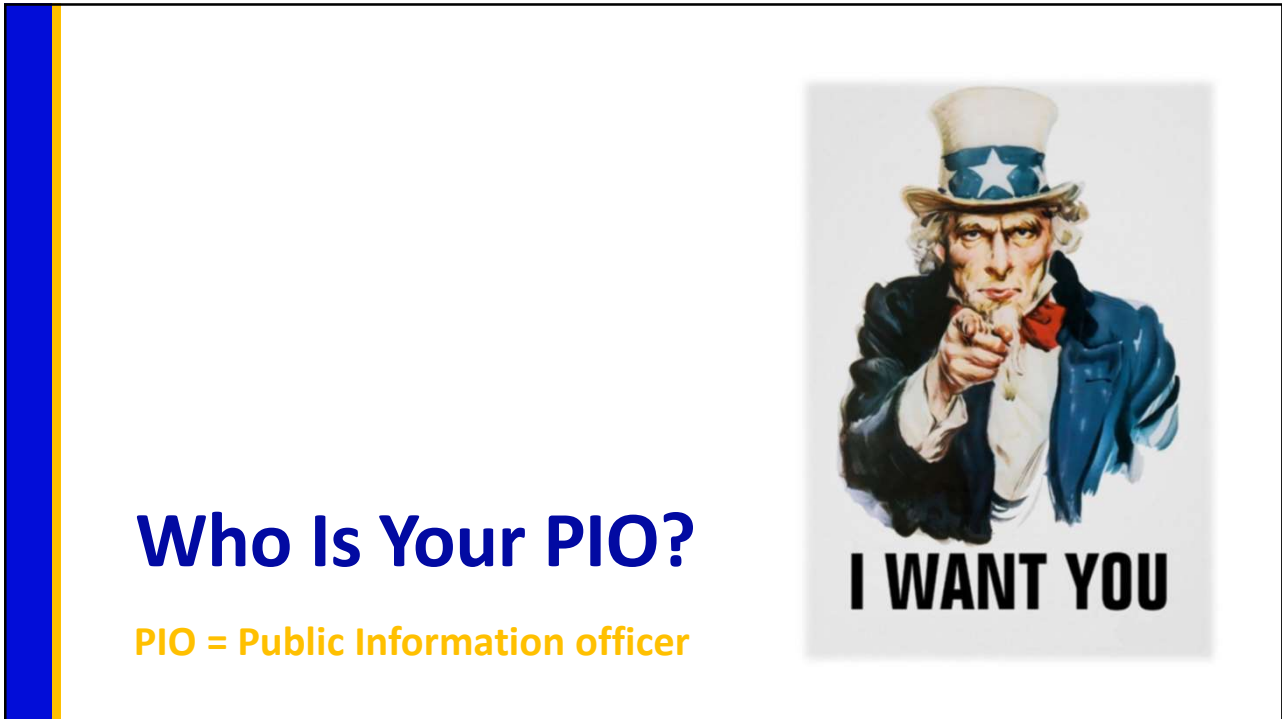
- Policies
- Do's & Don'ts
- Working with the Media
- Writing: News Releases, Etc.
- Social Media
- Public Records Requests

2




Policies

3



Who Is Your PIO?

PIO = Public Information officer



I WANT YOU

4

PIO Duties

- Primary media contact
 - Available, accessible
 - Fill requests
 - “Book” the spokesperson
 - Direct/redirect on-site media
- (Usually) Spokesperson
- Issues statements, news releases, social media, etc.
- Coordinating all agencies and approvals

5

Who is the Right Person(s)?

- Knowledgeable of the agency and duties
- Organized and able to meet deadlines
- Comfortable talking to media
- Willingness

6

Who is the Right Person(s)?

- Verify information policies within jurisdiction
 - Designated city/county official or agency?
 - Mayor, County Council, Sheriff, Prosecutor
- What agencies are involved?
 - Lead agency
 - Speak with **one voice** = coordinate + communicate

7

Plan Ahead

- Approvals and/or review channels
 - Who signs off?
 - Other agencies? Routing process?
- Provide name and contact info of PIO to staff, responders

8



9

Don't:

- Lie
 - Plausible deniability
- Say “no comment”
 - Redirect or explain lack of info
- Go “off the record”
- Don't favor “big” outlets
 - You have to live with your locals

10

Do/Remember:

- Top priority: Building & protecting the case
- Private property rights:
 - Owners may deny access to media
 - Owners may invite in media
- Citizen journalists are everywhere
- Set realistic expectations
 - Deadlines and info available



11



Working with the Media

12

Understanding Reporters

- They are people, too
 - Friendly, but not your friends
 - Some have motives or agenda
- They are generalists, not specialists
- They operate on deadline
- They are smarter than you think, but less knowledgeable



13

Interview Requests: Ask

- Deadline (meet it!)
- Topic to be discussed
 - Have them be specific (address/name)
- Media outlet & Reporter's name
- Location, format of interview
 - Live, phoner, in-studio, TV, radio, print, on-scene
- When will it run

14

Before the Interview

- Gather facts
- Plan your message
 - Generate some talking points
- Anticipate questions
 - Especially the hard ones!



15

Be Aware Of:

- Your audience
 - Speak to them *first*
- Your presence
 - Body language, posture
 - Dress appropriately for setting
- Mic is always “hot”
 - Don’t go “off the record”
 - Be careful when you speak



16

On-Scene “Stand Up”

- Ensure safety—the scene is secure
- Do stand-ups a safe distance from the scene
- Make sure everyone knows who PIO is
 - If not on-site, have contact info available to redirect
- Set expectations
 - “Ongoing investigation...”
 - “Developing case, so details unavailable right now...”

17

During The Interview

- Take a few deep, slow breaths
- Consciously slow down
 - Most people talk too fast under stress
- Speak conversationally
 - Without “um”, “uh” and “you know”
- Smile!



18

During The Interview

- Avoid jargon
 - Use plain language, not too scientific
 - “Tell Mom”
- Avoid humor in grave situations
- “I don’t know” is ok
 - Don’t fake it or be badgered to answer
 - Redirect to another source
 - Offer to research



19

During The Interview

- Listen carefully to the question
 - Easier for some mediums
- Lead with your key message
 - Details later, if you have time
- Aim for sound bites <15 to 30 seconds
- Restate question within the response



20

What Is A Sound Bite?

Reporter Question: “Was this the most horrifying display of animal neglect you have ever seen?”

Answer 1: “No.”

Answer 2: “Today, Big County Animal Control responded to an animal neglect situation in Anytown. Three dogs were removed to be evaluated. An investigation is underway, so we are not able to provide further details at this time.”

21

During the Interview

- Reporter asks a question again and again
 1. He didn't get the answer he wants
 2. You need to be more concise
- Clarify the question to avoid mistakes
- Don't fill the silence
 - That's the reporter's responsibility
 - Tool to gain more info

22

The Press Conference

- Useful after a big event with much public interest
- Opportunity for all agencies to speak
 - Coordinate with all PIOs
 - Highest rank speaks first (Mayor, Sheriff, Police Chief)
- PIO serves as the “MC”
 - Sets rules of engagement
 - Opens, introductions, closes
 - Distribute printed materials



23



Writing:
*News Releases,
Media Advisories
& All That Stuff*

24

Written Products

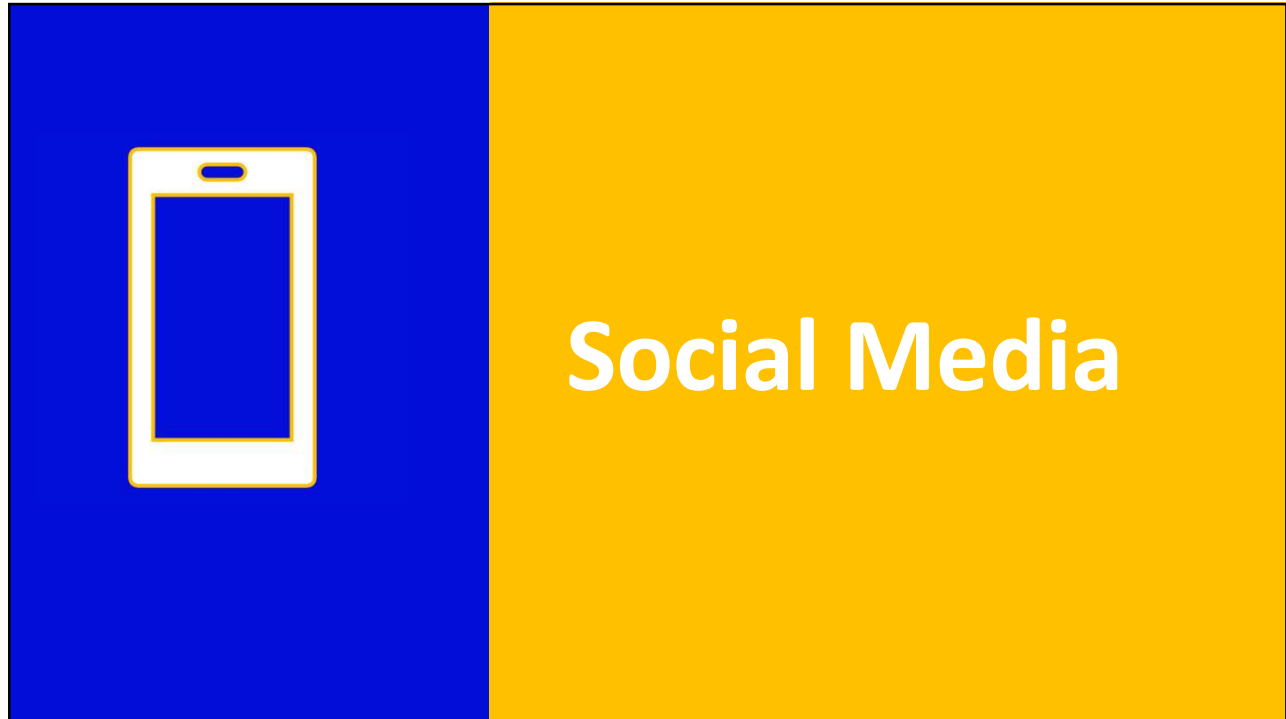
- **Press Release:** Factual report of activity
- **Statement:** In lieu of news release (less detail); issued in writing
- **Media Advisory:** Details for when/where for media op
- **Fact Sheet:** When more extensive detail is needed
- **Talking Points:** Prep for an interview (internal use); write as sound bites
- **Social Media:** Repurpose other content

25

News Release: Quick & Dirty How-To

1. List the key “W” facts:
 - Who – What – Where – When – Why
 - *Make sure the facts can be released*
2. Think about your audience: Talk to them
 - Stick to the facts—no descriptive judgements
3. Tell the story in a very concise way
 - Shorter usually equals better
4. Have someone review before releasing

26



27

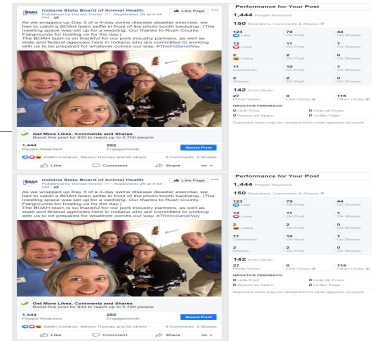
Social Media is a Powerful Tool

- 58.8% of Americans have a Facebook account
 - 193.9 million users a month!
- 12.8 million American teens use Instagram
- 93.55 millions Americans use Snapchat
- 1 billion hours of YouTube content viewed daily

28

Things to Remember

- Once posted, it's *never* gone!
- Think before you post
 - Tone, timing
 - This includes sharing others' posts
- Establish a commenting policy and post it online
 - Threatening, offensive, derogatory language
 - Consistent application
 - Free speech

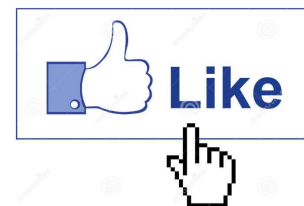


29

Engagement Spreads Information

Clicks, Shares, Likes, Comments

- Visual content 40 x more likely to get shared
 - 136,000 photos uploaded every minute
- Hashtags help connect engaged users
 - Mainly Instagram and Twitter
- ANY engagement spreads information
 - Doesn't have to be positive
 - Just clicking or commenting is enough!



30

Review Before Posting

- Second set of eyes
- **Scrutinize** images and videos
 - Look in the background
 - Zoom in
- Search hashtags before using
- Know policies about tagging individuals and/or using names

31



Public
Records
Requests

32

Public Records Requests

FOIA = Freedom of Information Act (*federal*)

APRA = Access to Public Records Act (*Indiana*)

Allows **anyone** access to:

- Emails, letters, reports, permits, licenses, applications, lists, maps, images
- Anything on an agency phone, computer, camera, email system

33

APRA Applies to:

All public agencies in Indiana, including local and county

- Committees & contractors

Unless specific laws prohibit release/disclosure

Records retention schedule

Be consistent (give to one means give to all!)

Law sets response timeline based on request method:

- 24 hours: in-person, phone, email/electronic
- 7 days: via mail or fax

Requestor may appeal a denial

34

APRA Exemptions: IC 5-14-3-4

Records and recordings exempted from disclosure

- Risk to public safety, security
- Deliberative material (decision-making/opinions)
- Work product of attorney
- Diaries, journals, personal notes
- Investigatory records “Ongoing investigation”
- Reasonably specific scope (time, names, details)
- Personal, private information (SSN, medical, financial)
- Victim contact info, juvenile and protective orders

35

Resources

www.in.gov/attorneygeneral/files/2013_PAC_Handbook.pdf

Office of Indiana Public Access Counselor:

W470, Indiana Government Center South
 402 West Washington Street
 Indianapolis, IN 46204
 (317) 234-0906
 (800) 228-6013
 Fax 233-3091

Public Access Counselor Handbook: www.in.gov/pac

Indiana Public Access Counselor
 Handbook on Indiana's Public Access Laws
 Updated July 2013

**Handbook on Indiana's Public Access Laws
 OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC ACCESS COUNSELOR**

Table of Contents

LETTER FROM THE ATTORNEY GENERAL AND PUBLIC ACCESS COUNSELOR 4

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE OPEN DOOR LAW 5

Who has access to government meetings? 5

What government meetings are open to the public? 5

What is a public agency? 5

Are there certain agencies that would normally qualify as "public agencies" pursuant to the ODL, but are exempt? 6

Is it possible for a non-for-profit corporation to be required to comply with the ODL? 6

What is a governing body? 6

What is a meeting? 6

What is not a meeting? 7

Can a member of a governing body attend a meeting electronically? 8

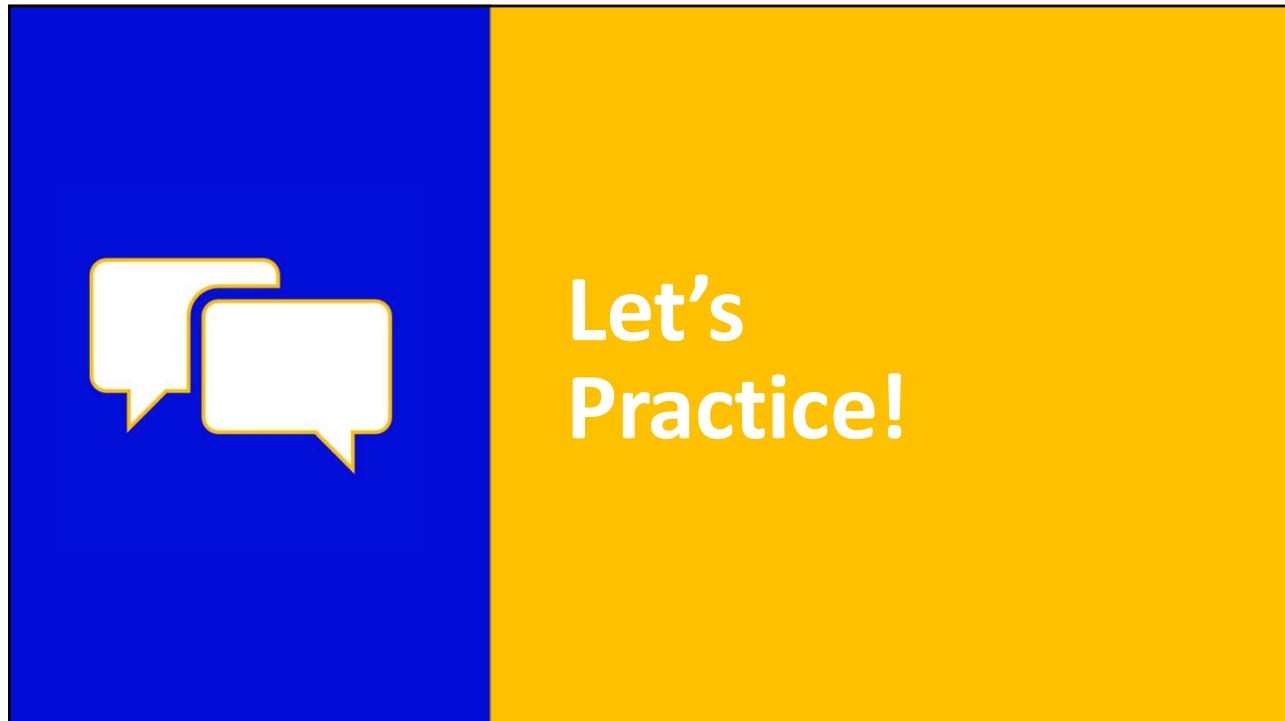
What is official action? 8

What is a serial meeting? 8

What if the need for a public meeting is uncertain? 8

What is significant about executive sessions? 8

36



Let's
Practice!

37



**What Experience
Have You Had?**

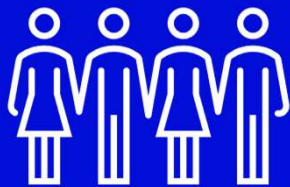
38

Scenario

After recent complaints from three individuals who adopted dogs, animal control made a visit to Sue Smith, who runs a popular rescue (Puppy Luv) from her home.

- *A court order was issued to confiscate all animals on-site to be assessed and rehomed. Based on findings:*
 - *67 extremely under-weight animals; mostly dogs, many with nursing pups*
 - *filthy conditions (standing water, fecal buildup, unclean cages), lack of ventilation with indoor temperature over 99 degrees*
- *Local animal control is the lead agency*
 - *assisted by Humane Helpers USA, which will take custody of the animals*
- *Many in the community have donated to Puppy Luv at fundraising events and perceive Ms. Smith to be “doing a lot of good”*

39



Final Thoughts

40

<p>Crisis Communication</p>	<p>Reality + Emotion <hr/>= Perception</p>
--	--

41

<p>Here to Help</p>	<p>Denise Derrer Spears <hr/>Mobile: 317-501-7583 Email: dderrer@boah.in.gov</p>
--------------------------------	--

42