

<b>SUBJECT:                      NEWS MEDIA RELATIONS</b>
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**NEWS MEDIA**

- A. To operate effectively, the Bureau must have the support of the public. A well informed public is essential to the functioning of a democratic nation; therefore, our citizens must be aware of current events. A free press serves the public by supplying needed information, stimulating thought and providing a medium for expression.
- B. Law enforcement agencies face particular challenges in dealing with the media. Such agencies must always balance legitimate law enforcement concerns with the public's legitimate desire for information.
- C. Law enforcement agencies have a responsibility to respect the media's first amendment rights. But these rights do not grant members of the media free access to all law enforcement information, records or activities; the public's "right to know" is not absolute. Other constitutional issues also come into play, particularly the individual's right to a fair trial, the right to privacy, the integrity of evidence, and the potential damage to a court case through undue or premature publicity.
- D. The Bureau wishes to make information concerning its activities available to the news media in a timely and appropriate fashion. The Bureau wishes to cultivate a positive relationship with local, state, and national media representatives, so that the public receives accurate information about Bureau operations. This relationship with the media, however, must be governed by statutory and policy requirements that reflect the Bureau's responsibilities within the criminal justice system.
- E. Unless otherwise directed, only individuals with the rank of Special Agent in Charge or Supervisor or above will have direct contact with the media concerning operations of the Bureau.