

Brookings County Media Relations Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure accurate, consistent, and legally appropriate communication between Brookings County government personnel and the media, while respecting the authority of elected and appointed officials and safeguarding the County's legal interests.

General Policy

Brookings County recognizes the importance of open communication with the public and the media. Designated County officials are authorized to speak to the media regarding matters within their respective areas of responsibility, subject to the limitations outlined in this policy.

Authorized Spokespersons

1. Elected Department Heads

Brookings County's elected department heads are authorized to speak to the media regarding matters related to their respective departments, programs, operations, and services.

2. Appointed Department Heads

Appointed department heads are authorized to speak to the media regarding matters related to their respective departments, programs, operations, and services, consistent with Brookings County policies and procedures.

3. Scope of Authority

Authorized spokespersons may provide factual information, explain department functions, and respond to routine media inquiries within their areas of responsibility.

Matters Requiring Referral

Notwithstanding the above, **media inquiries involving legal matters or legal concerns must be referred to the State's Attorney.** This includes, but is not limited to:

- Pending or threatened litigation
- Legal claims, lawsuits, or settlements
- Criminal investigations or prosecutions
- Matters involving legal liability or statutory interpretation

- Any issue where legal advice or interpretation is required

Department heads and staff shall not provide legal opinions or commentary on such matters and shall direct media inquiries to the State's Attorney's Office.

Coordination and Consistency

When appropriate, department heads are encouraged to coordinate with Brookings County administration and the State's Attorney to ensure accurate, consistent, and timely communication, particularly on matters of countywide significance.

Employees

Brookings County employees who are not designated spokespersons shall refer all media inquiries to their department head or appropriate authorized official.

Compliance

Failure to comply with this policy may result in corrective action in accordance with applicable Brookings County policies and procedures.

Adopted this _____ day of January 2026.

Chairperson, Brookings County Commission