



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

To: All Communications Officers

From: Robin Davis, Deputy Chief of Staff

RCD

Date Issued: *May 4, 2023*

Effective Date: *May 8, 2023*

Press Conference Policy

BACKGROUND

The City of Columbus from time to time holds press conferences – virtually or in person – to share information with journalists about an initiative, incident, event or other topic.

QUALIFICATIONS

The City of Columbus defines a Journalist as a person who engages in the gathering, procuring, compiling, editing and disseminating of news, regardless of the format or platform of the report. Journalists must work for or own a media company/outlet that is financially supported by subscriptions, advertising or grants, and it must have a structure by which readers can request corrections to published works. In addition, Journalists and media outlets must follow these basic principles:

- Seek truth and report it -- Ethical journalism should be accurate and fair. Journalists should be honest and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.
- Minimize harm -- Ethical journalism treats sources, subjects, colleagues and members of the public as human beings deserving of respect.
- Act independently -- The highest and primary obligation of ethical journalism is to serve the public.
- Be accountable and transparent -- Ethical journalism means taking responsibility for one's work and explaining one's decisions to the public.
- Endeavor to verify the authenticity of user-generated content before publishing or distributing it, holding it to standards that are equal or equivalent to those maintained for content acquired through other means.
- Be transparent about how content will be used and distributed to other platforms.



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

- Note that “Trending,” “going viral” or “exploding on social media” may increase urgency, but these phenomena only heighten the need for strict standards of accuracy.
- Resist false dichotomies – either/or, always/never, black/white thinking – and consider a range of alternatives between the extremes.

Individuals/media outlets may also qualify as Journalists if they, or the organization which they represent, are accredited by the Ohio Radio and TV Correspondents Association or the Ohio Legislative Correspondent Association.

A person/media outlet can be excluded from press conferences if they fail to meet the above criteria. People can also be excluded if communications received from them by city employees have been threatening or menacing.

DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY

A committee made up of public information officers from various departments will determine if a media outlet or individual meets the qualifications of a Journalist to be placed on the press conference invitation list. They will make their determinations based on the qualifications and criteria listed above and will notify those seeking to be added to the list of their decision.

If an individual/media outlet who does not qualify attempts to attend a press conference, they will be asked to leave.

EXCLUSIONS

Agencies and/or journalists determined to be ineligible will be reevaluated after one (1) year.