

Board Communications Policy

1. Purpose

One of the principal responsibilities of a Board of Directors is that of ensuring that Vancouver Coastal Health (the "Authority") has in place an effective program that enables the organization to communicate with the Government, stakeholders and the public generally.

An effective communications program will be proactive, comprehensive and focused and includes the following:

- a) it will be strategically designed to support the Authority's mandate by conveying the Authority's strategic directions and decisions, information about its operations, including adequate and prompt reporting of financial performance and results, and issues of interest; and
- b) it will establish annual objectives and initiatives to be performed and assessed.

The purpose of this Policy is to establish the fundamental parameters of a communications program for the Authority. The development and implementation of this communications program is primarily the responsibility of management.

2. Communications Program Scope

The Authority's communications program will reflect the needs of stakeholders, which include the following:

- a) patients, residents, clients, and the public;
- b) medical staff;
- c) health care professionals and staff;
- d) health foundations and volunteers;
- e) the Government of British Columbia; and
- f) other organizations and governments.

The program must also promote an active exchange between the various regional Health Authorities, the Provincial Health Services Authority, and other supporting organizations that share in, or affect, the delivery of health services by the Authority.

All aspects of the communications program must aim to inspire confidence. This requires that the Authority take the initiative in identifying and addressing areas of concern, and in providing

This material has been prepared solely for use at Vancouver Coastal Health Authority (VCH). VCH accepts no responsibility for use of this material by any person or organization not associated with VCH. A printed copy of this document may not reflect the current, electronic version on the VCH Intranet.

clear explanations of its planning, operations, and activities, and the benefits to patient care that will arise from them. It also requires that the communications program accept input from stakeholders, and provide full and reasonable answers to questions posed.

It must be an aim of the Authority's communications program to maintain transparency. As well, the communications program must make clear that the Authority is fully committed to the vision, mission, goals and objectives outlined in its strategic framework.

2.1 Communications with Patients, Residents, Clients, and the Public

- a) Primary responsibility for the Authority's communications with patients, residents, clients, and the public rests with management. It is management's task to develop an overall communications program to provide balanced and objective information to assist the public in understanding the Authority's goals, and the principal programs, which affect the public as either current or future patients.
- b) The Chair of the Board of Directors will be the primary spokesperson for the Board and, together with the other directors, will assist management, where appropriate, by participating in meetings with community and other groups. The Chair, in consultation with the CEO, will also accept speaking assignments dealing with the Authority's overall policy and direction.
- c) The Board of Directors may play a specific role in co-hosting with management any public consultation or information sessions or media briefings.
- d) The Board of Directors will also participate in, and support the objectives of, the communications program by holding Board meetings which are in part, or in total, open to the public in accordance with the provisions of the *Health Authorities Act* and in accordance with the Board's Policy on "*Open Board Meetings*."
- e) Individual Directors on the Board will participate in, and support the objectives of, the communications program at the community level by explaining their role as Directors, and displaying their commitment to the goals of the Authority.
- f) Individual Directors of the Board, unless directed by the Chair in consultation with the CEO, will not make public addresses, give press conferences, or provide formal or informal media briefings. Individual Directors of the Board will re-direct public or media enquiries to either the Vice President of the Health Service Area involved, or the VP of Communications, Equity and Partnerships.

2.2 Communications with Medical Staff

- a) Management will ensure that the Authority's medical staff is kept informed to the maximum extent possible of all on-going programs or activities or planned developments that may affect their roles and working environment.

- b) The Board of Directors will receive the reports and recommendations of the medical advisory committees and may, where circumstances warrant, arrange to meet with committee representatives.

2.3 Communications with Health Care Professionals and Staff

- a) Management will ensure that the Authority's health care professionals and staff are kept informed to the maximum extent possible of all on-going programs or activities or planned developments that may affect their roles and working environment.
- b) Management will ensure that a high degree of coordination of communications activities promotes continuity, consistency, and coverage within and among the Authority's departments and health service delivery areas.

2.4 Communications with Health Foundations and Volunteers

- a) The Authority will maintain a close liaison with local health foundations and volunteers.
- b) Responsibility for this liaison will rest primarily with Vice Presidents and the VP of Communications, Equity and Partnerships, who will inform local health foundations and volunteers about the Authority's goals and programs affecting their areas and facilities.
- c) The communications program will promote the involvement of local health foundations and volunteers in supporting the priorities established by the Authority.

2.5 Communications with the BC Government

- a) Communications with the BC Government will focus on reporting the short- and long-term results of the Authority's progress in supporting Ministry expectations in areas such as the quality of patient care, the realization of the specific targets set out in the Performance Agreement; the general wellness of the population served; and, the achievement of the financial goals established for sustainability.
- b) Management is responsible for reporting to the Ministry in a manner established between the Ministry and the Authority.
- c) The Committees of the Board of Directors will ensure that the formal reporting obligations to the Government are fulfilled in the areas with which the Committees are directly concerned.
- d) The Chair, in consultation with the CEO, will act as the direct interface with the Minister to identify issues that require joint examination, and to provide timely reporting of developments that have a significant impact on the Authority.
- e) The Board of Directors will communicate with the Minister through the Chair, and through the Chair's participation in the Leadership Council of all Authority Chairs, on matters which, in the view of the Board, affect the ability of the Authority to meet the Government's expectations.

This material has been prepared solely for use at Vancouver Coastal Health Authority (VCH). VCH accepts no responsibility for use of this material by any person or organization not associated with VCH. A printed copy of this document may not reflect the current, electronic version on the VCH Intranet.

2.6 Communications with Other Organizations and Governments

- a) Management will maintain a continuing dialogue with the other regional Health Authorities and related organizations to generate a broad sharing of experience, best practices, opportunities for potential efficiencies, alternative methods of service delivery, and problem identification in the pursuit of a common mandate.
- b) The Chair will facilitate this same level of cooperation and sharing of experience at the governance level through meetings with the Authority Chairs.
- c) Management will ensure that its communications program maintains regular contact with local, regional, Aboriginal, and federal governments in order to interpret the operations of the Authority to these governments, accommodate feedback from them, and factor the input into ongoing strategic and operational planning.

3.0 Accountability

Annually, management will present to the Board for review an overview of the strategic communications program which will outline the key objectives, elements and initiatives, all with related timelines, to be undertaken in the coming year.

In addition, management will regularly report to the Board on the progress of these key objectives and how the communications plan is performing against these key objectives and meeting the overall intent of this Policy.

Approved by: VCH Board		
Policy Created:	Revision Dates:	Approved
• 2002 10 16	• 2012 04 24	• 2020 02 13
	• 2023 06 01	• 2023 09 28
	• 2024 11 13	• 2025 02 27