



Regional Task Force on the Homeless

San Diego City & County

Policy:	Communications & Media Relations	Policy Number:	RTFHBP2
Owner of Policy:	Governance Board		
Policy Sponsor:	Merger Task Force		
Policy Approval By:	Governance Board		

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1. PURPOSE

The Regional Task Force on the Homeless (RTFH) is committed to the principle of accountability to the public which is served by the RTFH and its members. The RTFH Governance Board (Board) will uphold a policy of openness and transparency, balanced with its roles in representing the interest of the RTFH and those served.

This policy formally outlines rules and procedures that have been followed and will continue to be followed henceforth in respect to internal and external communications of the RTFH Board and Full Membership. To the extent any portion of this policy contradicts the Charter or the Bylaws, the terms of the Charter and Bylaws shall prevail.

2. POLICY

The Board will ensure there are processes for:

- Updating contact information;
- Communication with Members;
- Communication between Board and Staff;
- Communication with external stakeholders; and
- Public relations including use of the RTFH name.

3. PROCEDURE

Board members communicate with each other, staff, and members using a variety of methods, including U.S. mail, telephone, fax, and electronic mail.

Roster

Upon election, each Board member is asked for business address, business telephone number, fax number(s) and e-mail address. This information is included on a Board roster distributed to the Board and staff. The official Board roster containing only the Board members' institutional information (or other desired contact information) is listed on the RTFH website. The rosters are revised as needed throughout the year. Board members should advise staff immediately of any changes in the roster information.

Electronic Mail

Since the Board often communicates by electronic mail, it is imperative each Board member has access to e-mail.

Communication with Members

When issues of key importance to members, committees, or other Board-related groups arise, Board members sometimes receive communications through letters, e-mail, or telephone calls. In all cases, it is important for Board members to discuss such issues ahead of time, if possible. A consistent response that reflects the RTFH's viewpoint, contains the correct information, and includes the main reasons for the RTFH's position is key. Board members are certainly free to express their own personal points of view, but because it is sometimes difficult for members to separate "personal" from "Board" responses, care must be taken to make this distinction clear. In cases where Board members have questions about a particular issue or are uncertain about how to respond, posting to the Board listserv, a call to the Board Chair, and/or a call to staff may be necessary.

Communication between Board and Staff

In order to assure the flow of communication and orderly conduct of the business of the Board, these procedural guidelines for communications to and from RTFH staff are helpful:

Staff Communication to the Board

Official written communications addressed to the full Board from RTFH staff, whether for action or for information, are transmitted to the Board through the Executive Director or designee. The Executive Director and the appropriate staff should be informed of and copied on all routine informational documents to Board members.

By virtue of their specific responsibilities, some members of the staff communicate verbally on a regular basis with individual officers and Board members. In such cases, the Executive Director is kept informed about such communications on an ongoing basis. Staff members should consult with the Executive Director or their supervisor before bringing non-routine matters directly to individual officers or members of the Board.

It is not the intention of these guidelines to delay or inhibit communication in either direction; rather, the guidelines have been implemented to ensure misunderstandings and inconsistencies do not occur.

Board Communication with the Staff

Formal communications between the Board and staff as a whole are transmitted to staff through the Executive Director or designee. The Executive Director is responsible for directing the work of all RTFH staff. Therefore, although individual officers and Board members may have occasion to communicate directly with members of the staff to request information or assistance, in instances where it is not clear who might be the most appropriate staff member to respond or where a response may involve several staff members or require significant staff time or effort, requests should be directed to the Executive Director.

Board Liaisons

Board Members may be assigned liaison responsibility to Advisory Committees and other associated groups of the RTFH. The Board liaison is a representative to a unit for the purpose of facilitating communications between the Board and the unit. The liaison should receive copies of all agendas, minutes, reports, and other documentation from the unit, but Board members are not expected to attend all meetings of the unit. It is helpful for the liaison to maintain close communication with the unit chair and staff liaison.

Public Relations

At times the Board may have to make decisions that are not popular with one or more segments of the RTFH. It is critical to the ongoing health of the RTFH that clear, consistent, factual, and, for the most part, written rationales be used to convey such decisions.

Board members may be asked questions by the press and should be aware that when Board members express their views, the audience may assume the Board member is speaking for the Board and thus for the RTFH. Board members should be aware of this phenomenon and should clearly state when they are speaking for the RTFH and when they are speaking as personal members. When responding to questions from the press, Board members are encouraged to quote from the official record, i.e., the minutes and other documentation.

Guidelines for External Communication

Periodically the RTFH needs to communicate with external audiences on policies and issues relating to the RTFH's core purpose. In determining when to communicate and who shall represent the RTFH the following factors should be considered:

- Urgency of need to communicate;
- Significance of issue;
- Scope and impact of issue on the RTFH and its members;
- Need for consistent relationship; and
- Established policy on the issue

If the RTFH has established a position on an issue, the Executive Director and Board Chair are each authorized to communicate the RTFH's viewpoint to the outside world. Subsequently, the Executive Director and Board Chair will report such communications to the Board in a timely manner. When deciding who shall represent the RTFH, the factors listed above shall be used to make the determination.

If the RTFH has not established an official position on an issue and an external communication is needed without the delay caused by referral of the matter to the Board, the Executive Director and Board Chair are each authorized to send such communication, making the decision on who will represent the RTFH on a case-by-case basis using the factors above. Subsequently, the Executive Director and Board Chair will report such communications to the Board in a timely manner.

When urgency is not an issue and the issue is significant, the full Board may be consulted. Alternatively, as per Section 4.2.3 of the RTFH Governance Charter, the Executive Committee may act in place and stead of the Board between Board meetings and may act for the Board and make decisions on matters which require action before the next Board meeting.

Use of RTFH Name

The Board is the voice for the RTFH. Advisory Committees and other established units are not authorized to speak for the RTFH except through the Board. This is to say that unit leaders should refrain from issuing statements, taking positions, or endorsing any statements or positions except with Board approval.

Official Functions and RTFH Representation

From time to time, members of the Board may be asked to represent the RTFH in an official capacity. Examples include representing the RTFH at a conference or a regional, meeting, or as the official delegate to a special event. When the Board Chair chooses not to attend, he/she may designate another Board member to represent the RTFH.