



CITY OF PROVIDENCE

1.14 ACCESS TO AND VIDEO RECORDING OF CITY RESOURCES BY OUTSIDE PARTIES

Purpose

The City of Providence's buildings are public buildings and as such are sometimes visited by individuals or groups seeking to photograph, videotape or otherwise document City spaces, staff and other resources. This Policy intends to provide guidance on how to best manage these interactions, while complying with all applicable laws.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees, applicants, interns, fellows, contractors, and volunteers associated with the City of Providence.

There are separate rules for the oral and/or video recording of formal hearings, contingent upon the applicable laws and regulations for open meetings, board or commission standards, and court(s); individuals are encouraged to consult with the specific board, commission, and/or court for more information.

Policy

1. Preface

The City of Providence is dedicated to transparency within the limits of the law regarding the physical spaces it manages, the execution of its public mission, and the work done by its employees to serve the interests of the City's various stakeholders. Governmental entities are permitted under existing laws to impose time, place, and manner restrictions on access to public spaces, so long as those restrictions remain content neutral and are not applied solely to a particular individual or group but fairly applied to everyone. Therefore, the City has established the following policies regarding public access to its resources.

2. Access to City Owned or Managed Spaces

- A. Certain City offices or specific locations of individual offices, particularly those containing personal or business records, files, or other materials protected under Federal or State privacy laws, may be designated as available to "employees only" or to "authorized personnel only".
- B. In these circumstances, any individual granted access must be a city employee authorized to access such protected material, or alternately, an individual possessing an appointment or other invitation to enter the "authorized" area.
- C. Bilingual signage clearly indicating that access to certain spaces is limited to "Authorized Personnel Only" should be clearly posted indicating any department, facility, or other location to which access is limited to authorized individuals.
- D. When fielding inquiries about access to City spaces, and about areas which are limited in access to authorized individuals, staff are to remain polite and engaged throughout such visits and prepared to educate the public about why such spaces are so limited. This is of particular importance to departments that handle personal or sensitive information about Providence Neighbors or business entities.
- E. Staff should always try to be welcoming and informative when interacting with constituents seeking access to City spaces or resources, and must avoid stating or inferring that such areas are "restricted", "not public", or "private", while at the same time reiterating that certain designated



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spaces may be accessed only by authorized individuals, and that only City employees or those with appointments may access these space, to comply with existing laws designed to safeguard the privacy of certain information. In the case of anyone filming, staff are reminded to follow common practices, customer service values and training. In the case of media, please contact the Director of Communications, Mayor's Office, in case additional follow-up is needed.

3. **Access to Public Documents**

- A. When fielding inquiries pertaining to accessing public documents, please note that the release of public records should be requested pursuant to the Access to Public Records Act (APRA) and follow all City procedures.
- B. The City's Public Records Request Procedures can be found at <https://www.providenceri.gov/law-department/public-records-request/>.
- C. Staff are reminded that Protected Personal Information (PPI), Protected Health Information (PHI), Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) or other confidential information are not public records and should not be released without proper authorization. Directors and management staff must be prepared to support where necessary and be comfortable articulating how the City processes all requests for information received.
- D. If Staff have any specific questions regarding the City's APRA procedures, they may contact the Law Department's Public Records Unit.

4. **On Filming in Public Spaces**

- A. The City cannot and does not restrict the filming of spaces within public buildings, if all such filming takes place from an authorized location.
 1. *As an example, if an individual enters an office space within a City building and is standing in a reception area which is not restricted to authorized personnel, and if that individual proceeds to film an area beyond that space (such as desks behind a gate) they are within their rights, and free to do so.*
- B. As such, it is the responsibility of employees to ensure that materials subject to privacy laws which may be viewed or photographed from authorized spaces are safeguarded. Staff must turn over or securely file paperwork containing PPI, PHI, HIPAA or other confidential information when not in use, lock computer screens, and reposition workspaces in a manner which prevents such private content from being viewed or photographed from authorized areas.
- C. Staff may under no circumstance tell individuals that they are not authorized to film. If individuals demand to view materials or documents on workstations, staff should not state that such materials are "confidential". Any determination of whether an item may be shared fully or in part with redactions is determined in consultation with the City's legal team through the aforementioned public records request procedures. Staff should understand and be prepared to communicate that the City seeks to be as transparent as possible.

5. **Employee Safety**

The safety of City staff is always a top priority. As with any circumstance, if any staff member begins to feel unsafe or unsure how to de-escalate an interaction with a member of the public, they should seek the support of their management team or Public Safety, as appropriate. Staff must know how to seek support, if they need it.