

GUIDE FOR THE MEDIA

MIDCENTRAL DISTRICT HEALTH BOARD

General media enquiries

MidCentral District Health Board's Communications Unit, based at Palmerston North Hospital, manages all media enquiries and requests for interviews, photography and filming. We aim to respond in an open, constructive and timely manner.

On weekdays in normal business hours (8am - 5pm), you can reach MidCentral DHB's Communications Officer at (06) 350 8945 or (06) 350 8900 or communications@midcentraldhb.govt.nz

After-hours media enquiries

Outside of normal business hours, at weekends and public holidays, the Communications Officer will respond as soon as possible the next business day, unless an earlier response is deemed necessary. After-hours media enquiries should be sent to communications@midcentraldhb.govt.nz

Media requests for patient conditions

We can provide information, when available, about a patient's medical status, as below:

- **Being assessed in the Emergency Department**
- **Discharged**
- **Stable** (condition unchanged or slightly improved)
- **Serious, but stable** (vital signs stable, within normal limits; patient conscious and comfortable)
- **Serious** (vital signs stable and within normal limits; patient conscious but may be uncomfortable)
- **Critical** (vital signs unstable, not within normal limits; patient may not be conscious)

We cannot provide information about a patient who has been discharged or patients using community health services.

To help us provide a quicker response, please include details as best you can, such as patient name, gender, age, where they were transported from, the day and approximate time of arrival at the hospital.

All requests for patient conditions should be sent to communications@midcentraldhb.govt.nz

Information about patients

Please remember we are bound by patient confidentiality and therefore cannot release further information without the consent of the patient, or their parent/guardian if the patient is a child.

Even if consent is provided, clinicians have the right to override it if they believe it is in the best interests of the patient; taking into consideration patient wellbeing and safety, privacy for other patients and other factors.

Confirmation of a patient's death occurs only with family consent and after notifying next of kin. In some circumstances we may have to refer your enquiry to a police media liaison officer.

Requests for patient interviews

We will check with the patient's clinical team that they are well enough to be interviewed. It is then up to the patient or their parent/guardian to agree to be interviewed and to give consent to be photographed or filmed.

Guidelines for media visiting MidCentral DHB sites

The Communications Unit must approve any media visit to Palmerton North Hospital, Horowhenua Health Centre and other MidCentral DHB property. This is in consideration of the rights to confidentiality of our patients, their families and our staff. If media are found on-site without permission, they will be asked to leave immediately.

Patient or parental permission alone is insufficient consent, as we need to consider patient safety, privacy for other patients and other factors such as infection control risks and staff concerns.

Please let us know your requests in advance. The Communications Unit will liaise with the clinicians and patient and endeavour to arrange a mutually-convenient time and location for your interview, and will arrange to meet you first at the main reception.

If you want to photograph or film a patient, family member or staff member, we may be able to obtain their consent on your behalf, in advance. In some circumstances, we may have photographs that can illustrate your story and we can also provide you with images of the hospital, (some) staff and board members. We are also happy to take high-resolution photographs for you to use.

Official Information Act requests

Please send OIA requests to ويا@midcentralthb.govt.nz

The *Making Official Information Requests* guide can be found at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/resources-and-publications/guides/official-information-legislation-guides