



# Media Relations Training

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This could be  
you

While we all make  
mistakes...

most people's don't  
end up on the front  
page!



# Kelli Narde and Sheera Poelman



Director of Cultural and  
Media Services



Senior Digital Media  
Specialist

# What not to do...





Sometimes  
this is what  
you would  
like to do



# Littleton's Media Relations Policy

- ▶ Foster a spirit of cooperation with the press.
- ▶ Respond in a timely manner.
- ▶ Respond with factual information.
- ▶ Release information simultaneously. "Exclusives" can ruin relationships.

# What employees can't discuss



# General Media Communication



IDENTIFY KEY  
MESSAGING




C.O.P.E CREATE ONCE  
PUBLISH EVERYWHERE



UTILIZE ALL FORMS OF  
COMMUNICATION

# City Council Notification

Council members don't like seeing something in the news or on social media that they know nothing about.



Before sending out a press release or sitting for a media interview, notify the communications department, the City Manager's office and council.

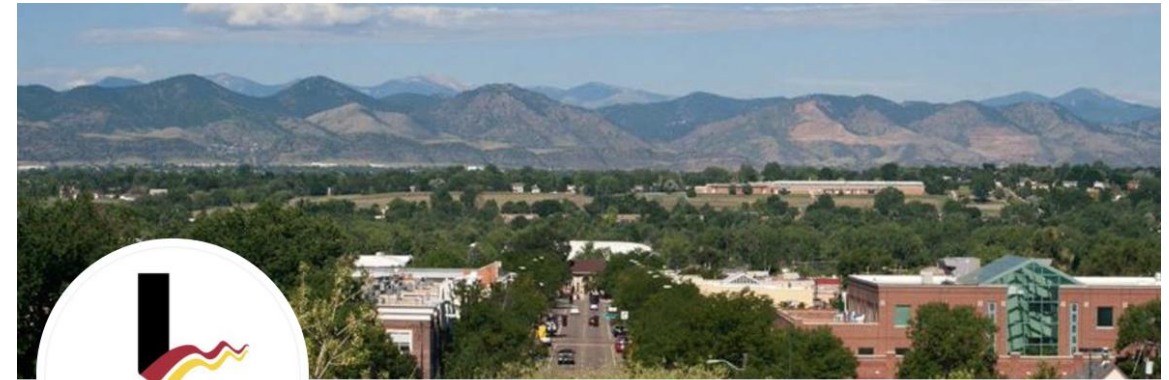
# Responding to Crisis

- ▶ The media will become very aggressive when covering breaking news.
- ▶ Tell them only what you know for sure. Circumstances can change quickly as an incident evolves.



# Responding to Crisis

- ▶ Utilize website, social media channels, and video capabilities.
- ▶ Twitter is the most effective platform for crisis communication with the media.
- ▶ If there is a multiple agency response, identify one agency as the point of contact.



Littleton

Edit profile

**Littleton, Colorado** ✓

@CityofLittleton

Official Twitter account for the City of Littleton, Colorado. Social media policies:  
[littletongov.org/connect-with-u...](http://littletongov.org/connect-with-u...)

📍 Littleton, Colorado 🔗 [littletongov.org](http://littletongov.org) 📅 Joined March 2009

180 Following 10.3K Followers

Tweets

Tweets & replies

Media

Likes

# Responding to Crisis

- ▶ Find out what questions reporters have and get back to them, even if you still don't have the answers.
- ▶ Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know."
- ▶ Don't tell people how they should feel, i.e. "I know what you're going through."
- ▶ Don't use sarcasm or humor
- ▶ As a city employee or elected official, your position as a "public official" will be highly sought.
- ▶ Assume that nothing you say is "off the record"
- ▶ A lack of response gives implied consent that whatever is reported is true.

# Interviewing Tips



- ▶ Don't feel pressured, you can set the time or take a moment to gather your thoughts and get back to them.
- ▶ Identify key messaging and stick to it.
- ▶ Answer questions in complete sentences.
- ▶ Keep calm, don't allow your emotions to take over.

# Keep coming back to key messaging

- ▶ "The bottom line is..."
- ▶ "We must not lose sight of..."
- ▶ "The critical point is..."
- ▶ "Keep in mind that..."
- ▶ Know what to say regardless of the question that is asked.



# Hypothetical question

- ▶ "What if..."
- ▶ There may be underlying assumptions that may appear to be true unless you clarify. If you disagree, say so.
- ▶ Response: "I can't predict the future..."



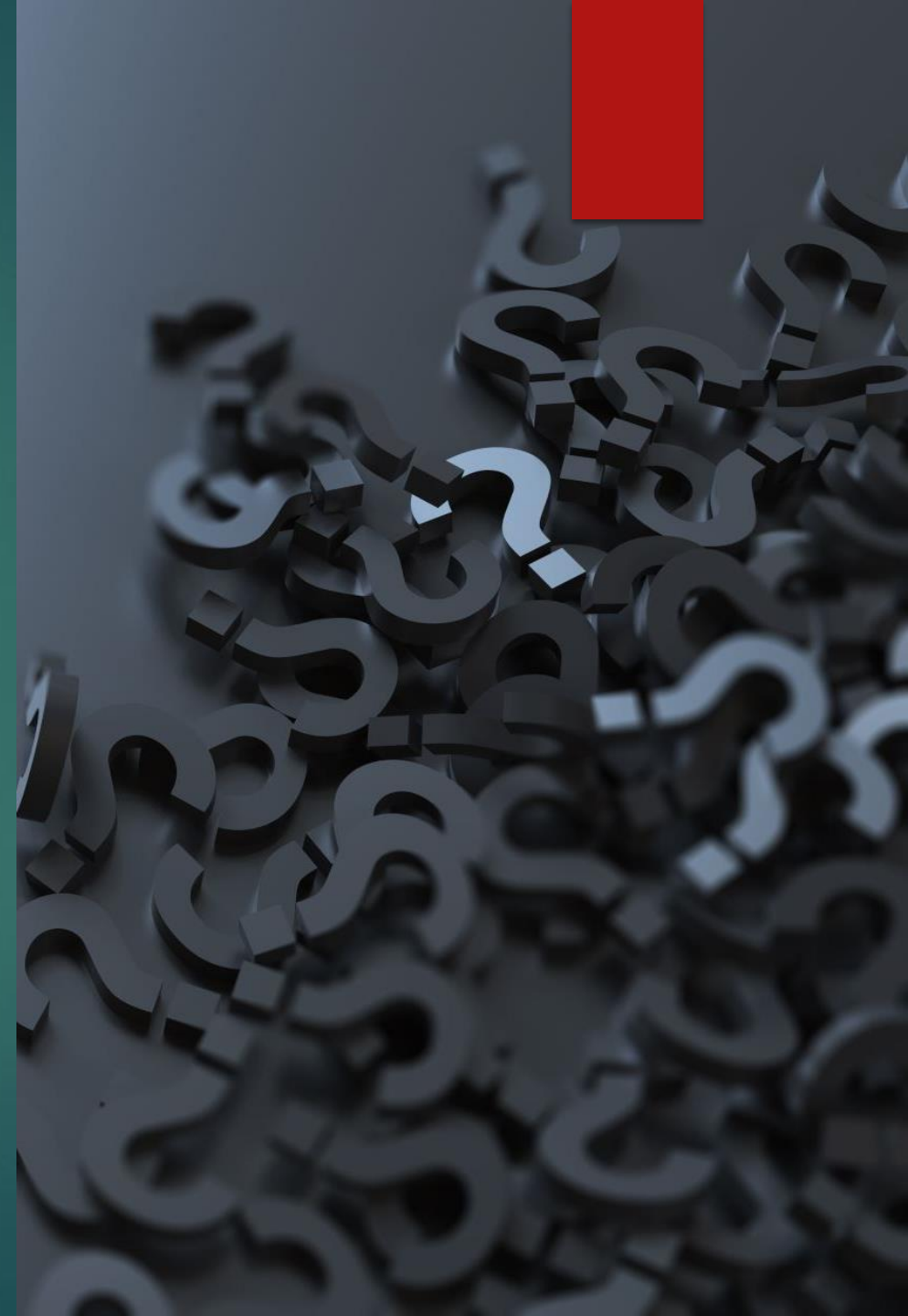
# Out of bounds question

- ▶ "Why did x do y?"
- ▶ You're are being asked to judge someone else's behavior or performance.
- ▶ Response, "I don't have first-hand knowledge of that." Or "It's too soon to say."



# General Probing Question

- ▶ "Do you always..."
- ▶ It is best to respond in broad terms rather than specifically. Avoid always and never.
- ▶ Response: "Our policy in these matters is to..."



# Loaded preface question

- ▶ "X is true, what about y?"
- ▶ Correct the inaccurate or inflammatory statement first if needed. If you leave it alone, you will seem to be giving it credence.
- ▶ Response: "While x is true, we are still working to understand y..."

# Loaded question

- ▶ Which is it? A or B?"
- ▶ Be aware of this Catch-22 situation and don't let yourself be forced into a response.
- ▶ Response: "Neither one..."



# Don't you agree question

- ▶ "Do you agree that..."
- ▶ This type of question will end up putting words in your mouth . Say what you want to say.
- ▶ Response: "We believe that..."



# Don't be afraid to ask for help

- ▶ Your Communications team
- ▶ CML PIO's
- ▶ ESPIOC
- ▶ You peers and neighboring jurisdictions.



# Don't underestimate the power of social media

## ▶ Littleton's Social Media Following:

- ▶ Facebook: 9,005 followers
  - ▶ Twitter: 10.3K followers
  - ▶ Next Door: 19,325 followers
  - ▶ Instagram: 2,756 followers
- 
- ▶ 55% of adults get news from a social media- Pew Research
  - ▶ 7 in 10 Americans have at least on social media account- Pew Research

If your agency is not using social media, you need to be.



# Social Media Warning

- ▶ It is important to be mindful of what is posted on social media.
- ▶ Even though many social platforms are used for personal use, they can easily be viewed by the media and are considered public.
- ▶ Remember that you are a representation of your organization.



Thank you