

# LAW ENFORCEMENT AND THE COMMUNITY

## CHAPTER 8: FORMING PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE MEDIA MUTUAL RELIANCE OF THE POLICE AND THE MEDIA

- Media can shape public opinion. Most police are concerned about their public image.
- **Symbiotic:** Mutual dependence upon each other.



- 1<sup>st</sup> amendment to the U.S. Constitution guarantees the public's right to know. (Freedom of Press)
- 6<sup>th</sup> amendment guarantees suspects right to a fair trial and protects defendant's rights.
- Police may need to withhold information from the media until the next of kin are notified, for public safety, or to protect the integrity of an investigation.
- To make sure the media personnel are safe at explosive situations, police will meet with media representatives to explain the safety rules before the incident arises.
- Conflict doesn't need to be dysfunctional. Healthy conflict between media and police is necessary and beneficial.

### MEDIA'S IMPACT ON THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

**News Media Echo Effect:** Theory that media has the power, through their coverage of isolated, high-profile cases, to influence the operations of the criminal justice system and even the disposition of individual cases.

### BEING PROFESSIONAL WHEN INTERVIEWED

- **Soundbites:** Good, solid information stated within 7 to 12 seconds.

## LYING TO THE MEDIA

- Department should explain and/or apologize and show why it was necessary to lie to the media if it might save a life or protect the public.

## WHO CAN SPEAK TO THE DEPARTMENT?

- **Public Information Officer (PIO):** Officer trained in public relations and assigned to provide accurate consistent information while controlling leaks of confidential or inaccurate information and managing negative situations to the department's benefit.



- **Perp Walk:** Police practice parading the suspects before the media, often for the publicity provided by the news media coverage.

## UNDERSTANDING AND IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH THE MEDIA

- A police-media survey found out that accessibility to police data and personnel was what affected the relationship most.
- Reporters may give an incomplete story because of ignorance, oversimplification, or time-constraints.
- To improve the relationship between the police and media, journalists should know a department's policies and procedures regarding the media and crime scenes. Officers should avoid jargon and technical words or phrases and respect reporters' deadlines by releasing information in a timely manner so the news media has a chance to fully understand the situation.

## STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE MEDIA

- Public support is **important** as police departments adopt the community policing philosophy and take action on strategies. The media can play an important role in getting that support or losing it.