

# 2026 HBA Media Relations and Public Statement Guidelines

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If you are contacted by members of the media in connection with your role as an HBA volunteer leader or representative, please follow these guidelines to ensure consistent, accurate, and appropriately approved communication on behalf of the organization.

These guidelines apply to all HBA branches, chapters, regions, affiliates, operating boards, and volunteer leaders.

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## Centralized Media Communications

To protect the integrity, consistency, and reputation of the HBA brand, all official media responses and public statements on behalf of the HBA must be coordinated through the HBA Central Marketing and Communications team.

Local leaders should not independently issue statements, provide interviews, respond to media inquiries, or represent organizational positions without prior written approval from the HBA Staff team.

This applies to:

- Traditional media interviews (i.e. TV, radio, print)
  - Trade and industry publications
  - Podcasts
  - Digital publications and blogs
  - Social media commentary requested by reporters
  - Crisis or reputational situations
  - Statements regarding HBA programs, partnerships, leadership, operations, or organizational positions
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## Positive and Proactive Media Opportunities

Media outreach may include positive opportunities such as:

- Requests for interviews
- Coverage of HBA events or initiatives
- Commentary on industry topics
- Member or leadership spotlights
- Partnership announcements
- Awards or recognition opportunities

While these opportunities are valuable, they still require coordination and approval through the appropriate escalation channels before engagement occurs.

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## Reactionary or Sensitive Media Situations

Media inquiries may also arise in response to:

- Organizational criticism
- Reputational issues
- Leadership transitions
- Social or political events connected to the organization
- Event incidents or operational concerns
- Misinformation or public complaints

In these situations, it is especially important that no local statements, comments, or responses are made independently. Even informal or “off the record” comments can be interpreted as official HBA positions.

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### **Escalation Process**

If media outreach is received:

- Branches, chapters, and regional leaders should immediately escalate the inquiry to their Operating Board leadership
- Operating Boards should escalate the matter directly to the HBA Central Marketing and Communications team
- No response should be provided until guidance and approval are received from HBA Staff

If the inquiry is urgent or time-sensitive, indicate the deadline provided by the media outlet when escalating.

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### **Approved Spokespersons and Statements**

All official media statements should be:

- Drafted or approved by HBA Central Staff
- Reviewed by HBA Central Staff for accuracy, legal considerations, and reputational impact
- Shared only by approved spokespersons or designated representatives

In limited or extenuating circumstances, the HBA Central Staff team may authorize another qualified professional or leader to deliver a statement or participate in media engagement. This authorization must be explicitly provided in writing.

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### **Personal vs. Organizational Commentary**

Volunteer leaders may continue to engage in personal professional conversations and thought leadership in their individual capacity. However, leaders should not:

- Present personal opinions as official HBA positions
- Speculate publicly on behalf of the organization
- Speak to media as an HBA representative without approval
- Respond to media inquiries using HBA branding, titles, or affiliation in ways that imply official organizational endorsement

When uncertainty exists, leaders should err on the side of escalation and coordination.

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## **Best Practices for Media Inquiries**

### *Recommended Approaches*

- Remain professional, calm, and courteous
- Acknowledge receipt of inquiries without providing substantive comment
- Escalate inquiries promptly through the appropriate channels
- Preserve relevant context, screenshots, emails, or communications when appropriate
- Direct media contacts to the HBA Central Marketing and Communications team for follow-up

### *Actions to Avoid*

- Providing unapproved quotes or statements
- Commenting “off the record”
- Speculating or sharing incomplete information
- Responding emotionally or defensively to negative coverage
- Posting public responses to HBA-related issues on personal or HBA-affiliated social channels without approval
- Creating and distributing independent press statements, holding statements, or talking points without authorization

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## **Guiding Principle**

Consistent, centralized communication helps protect the credibility of the HBA, its members, volunteers, partners, and community. Coordinated media engagement ensures that responses are accurate, aligned, and reflective of the organization’s values and strategic priorities.

For questions or urgent media-related matters, please contact your Operating Board leadership or the HBA Central Marketing and Communications team immediately.

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