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## **Brain Injury Association of Windsor/Essex County ("BIAWE") Communications Policy**

This policy will serve to guide the organization in all of its communication activities and to be the basis for the development of communications plans (long-term and short-term) by clarifying roles and responsibilities and, where required, procedures. It is broadly divided into four large areas: Internal, External, Media Relations, Publications.

It is the goal of this policy to ensure consistency and the professional delivery of BIAWE's messages to all of its stakeholders and target audiences, thereby strengthening the long-term future of the organization.

By working with and through the media, BIAWE will communicate its mission and objectives to increase the level of understanding by the public of the issues being faced by those persons living with the effects of ABI.

### **I – INTERNAL**

#### **Minutes of meetings**

A written record will be kept of all board and committee meetings. All minutes will include date, time and place of meeting; attendees and regrets; declarations of conflict of interest; motions and voting outcomes; background information and discussion highlights. A copy of all such minutes will be kept on file at BIAWE's office. Minutes will be recorded by the secretary or other board member and edited by the meeting's chair prior to circulation. All minutes are subject to amendment and ratification at their subsequent meeting.

#### **Reports**

In general, any report from a staff member to non-staff members (board members, volunteers, CAAC or SAC members, board committees) must be approved by the chair prior to circulation. Wherever possible, at least one other staff member should review a report prior to its circulation.

#### **Memos and Fax Covers**

All memos and fax cover sheets should be formatted using the same, approved template.

## **II EXTERNAL**

### **Spokespersons**

The President and Past President are the chief spokespersons for BIAWE. Wherever possible, peer-to-peer responses to incoming inquiries (e.g. unsolicited letters, phone calls, interview requests, etc.) or outgoing communication ( e.g. position papers, letters to the editor, solicitations, acknowledgements, etc.) will be used. Both the President and Past President may delegate this responsibility to other board or to others.

All spokespersons should undertake media training.

The President and Past President will, circumstances permitting, review each other's responses prior to delivery or, if deemed necessary, refer the issue at hand to the board or relevant committee for study and input prior to responding.

The President and Past President will ensure that at least one other board member/staff member is prepared to fulfill this role in their absence.

All other board and staff members will refer any such unsolicited inquiries to the President or the Past President or their designate as the case may be.

In every instance, and utilizing approved message formats, reference to BIAWE's mission statement and ongoing activities should be included wherever possible. If verbal, a summary of the issue and the discussion should be recorded and distributed to other board or staff members appropriate. All written replies will be kept on file at BIAWE's office.

### **Reports**

In general, any report from BIAWE (including funding requests) to an external source (government departments or agencies, not-for-non-profit associations and charities, corporations, etc.) must be recommended to the board via the President, board committee or board member and approved by the board prior to circulation. Wherever possible, at least one other staff member should review a report prior to its circulation.

## **Correspondence**

A copy of all correspondence from the President will be kept at BIAWE's office and filed by date. Copies should also be filed in the appropriate issue folder for cross reference.

## **Meeting and Committees/Task Forces**

BIAWE should represent the concerns and issues affecting persons living with the effects of ABI. All appointments to any such external committees, task forces or requests by government for input on related policies must be made by the board. Those appointed will (a) provide a written summary of activities and issues (b) bring any action requiring board approval or BIAWE's resources to the attention of the related committee or board as soon as practical.

Continuing participation will be based on annual evaluation of resources expended and outcomes.

## **III – MEDIA RELATIONS**

### **Releases**

BIAWE will keep an up-to-date database of all Ontario media outlets and develop relationships with provincial editors and reports that cover issues related to ABI (health, social services, society, human interest).

BIAWE will have media kits available to accompany media releases or presentations when required. In general each kit will include: News Release, fact sheet on the subject, history of the subject, further quotes or references to the subject from experts (and their contact information), relevant press clippings or other printed material, visual material (charts, photographs), short biography of spokesperson quoted in release, one-page description of BIAWE. To ensure consistency and up-to-date material, only BIAWE staff will prepare such media kits, which may also accompany funding requests when required. In the absence of a staff member a board director may prepare these kits.

### **OP/ED and Letters to the Editor**

When appropriate and timely, BIAWE will write or commission informed-opinion essays or letter to advance the understand of its mission and activities or comment on new items related to its mission and activities. Staff and board members will bring immediate opportunities for comment to the attention of the President or designate who will decide:



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(a) if a response is warranted (b) who should write and revise (c) which official spokesperson should sign off. The President will also ensure that follow-up personnel have copies of all relevant documentation, that they are available for comment and that their contact information (given to the media) is current.

## **Editorial Boards**

When issues arise of sufficient impact and of an ongoing nature (e.g. changes to legislation or regulations), the Board should arrange to meet with the editorial boards of publications that have a broad reach in Ontario. Wherever possible the President or designate and BIAWE's "expert" staff or volunteers should attend such meetings to provide depth and background. Requests by the media for follow-up information will be treated as a priority.

## **Media Briefings**

Same policy as Editorial Boards, but for reporters.

## **News Conference**

When a specific issue of sufficient impact (e.g. new statistical documentation of the role weather plays in the incidence of automobile collisions), the President or designate should hold a news conference to bring this new information to the attention of all media (print, radio, TV, cable) that have broad reach in Ontario. Wherever possible the President or designate and BIAWE's "expert" staff or volunteers should attend such meetings to provide depth and background. Where appropriate and practical, survivors or caregivers should be on hand to provide further comment. Requests by the media for follow-up information will be treated as a priority.

## **Staged Events**

Public events (e.g. Brain Injury Awareness Month (BIAM), Fundraisers)

The communications component of these events (i.e. releases, brochures, posters, PSAs, paid advertising, in-house articles) must support one or more messages that have been developed from an existing communications plane (e.g. BIAWE's Mission Statement, or selected statistics from its research) or from a separate plan whose specified goal will be enhanced or achieved by the event (e.g. the goal of BIAM is to increase BIAWE's name recognition by 10%).



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Communications components may be written or designated by staff, board, volunteers or consultants, but the final sign off on all such material must be by the President or designate.

## **Research**

All research undertaken by BIAWE either directly or through third-party studies must include a communications plan. Depending on the relevance and scope of the results obtained, research findings will be released using the tools and policies mentioned above. All research undertaken by BIAWE either directly or through third-party studies must support BIAWE's Mission Statement and be directly related to at least one of BIAWE's objects.

## **IV PUBLICATION**

### **Disclaimer**

BIAWE publishes "Step Ahead" twice per year in the spring and fall. The opinions expressed in the newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of BIAWE, its directors, staff, or members.

BIAWE welcomes advertisers from all sectors. The products or services advertised in the newsletter are not endorsed, or necessarily supported by BIAWE, its directors, staff, or members. BIAWE and "Step Ahead" assume no liability for medical treatment, legal advice, or other activity undertaken by readers as a result of anything contained in its publications. Individuals and families should consult their personal health-care providers or legal counsel for medical and/or legal advice.

### **Advertising**

BIAWE welcomes advertising in "Step Ahead". Advertisers must ensure that their copy is in good taste, and void of labeling or disparaging wording. Advertisers should clearly state the individual groups' credentials, benefits or risks of any product or service; advertisers must refrain from misleading statements that imply a cure, reversal, or healing of brain injury.

Advertisers who are supporters of BIAWE and/or member/supports of community brain injury associations or support groups in their local community, may not imply or assert to



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the general public that their support, or membership, or declaration thereof, is an endorsement by BIAWE or its directors, staff or members for their products or services. No advertisement will be accepted for publication until a completed, signed Insertion Order Form is received.

BIAWE reserves the right to refuse publication of any advertisement. Advertisers should include a self-addressed stamped envelope if they want their artwork returned following publication.

## **Sponsorship/Grants**

Sponsorship and grants may also be arranged. Due to grantors' guidelines, sponsorship of some publications may not be available to commercial entities. (e.g. If a grant has been secured for a publication, any further funding from a sponsorship may have to be refunded to the grantor to prevent "double-dipping.") Acknowledgement of any sponsorship will form part of the sponsorship agreement, which must be made for each publication. Under no circumstances can that acknowledgement be located on the front panel of the publication. No exclusive right of sponsorship of any publication can be given under any conditions. Sponsorship of any BIAWE publication cannot convey any editorial rights to the sponsor beyond the wording and design of the sponsorship acknowledgement.

## **Editorial**

BIAWE welcomes submissions to its newsletter "Step Ahead", which is the voice for survivors, family members, professionals and the associations. BIAWE is committed to producing a quality publication, expressing the opinions, concerns and idea of its readers and contributors.

"Step Ahead" articles should be informative, positive and a clear reflection of its readership. Articles should be written in an "easy-to-read" and "easy-to-understand" format. Contributions are discouraged from using highly technical, medical or legal terms. Contributors must refrain from using disparaging language and labels (See Language Policy). Contributors should clearly state the individual or groups' credentials, benefits or risks of product or service and avoid misleading statements that imply a cure, reversal, or healing of brain injury. Simultaneous submissions are discouraged.

BIAWE reserves the right to edit for content and length and/or refuse publication. In special circumstances, BIAWE may provide an editorial assistant to work with a contributor to ensure an accurate representation of the subject matter.



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The Editor of “Step Ahead” will choose cover artwork, which will be selected based on thematic consistency with the issue, where possible.

A query letter must be sent to the Editor prior to the submission of any article greater than 500 words (See Writers Guidelines.) BIAWE cannot guarantee publication of any accepted article. Articles are published in particular issues according to space available, balance, and thematic consistency with the issue, etc.

## **Reprints**

BIAWE encourages reprints of articles appearing in “Step Ahead” Credit must be given to the author, publication and photographer, where applicable.

Follow-up personnel should have copies of all relevant documentation; make sure that they are available for comment and that their contact information (given to the media) is current.

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Dated April 22, 2009.