



From the Desk of: Information Security Officer

FERPA TIPS

What is FERPA?

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that affords parents the right to have access to their children's education records, the right to seek to have the records amended, and the right to have some control over the disclosure of personally identifiable information from the education records. When a student turns 18 years old, or enters a postsecondary institution at any age, the rights under FERPA transfer from the parents to the student ("eligible student"). The FERPA statute is found at 20 U.S.C. § 1232g and the FERPA regulations are found at 34 CFR Part 99.

The simple definition . . . FERPA grants four specific rights to an "eligible student"

- the right to see the information that the institution is keeping on the student
- the right to seek amendment to those records, and in certain cases append a statement to the record
- the right to consent to disclosure of his/her records
- the right to file a complaint with the FERPA Office in Washington

To Whom Does the Act Apply ?

FERPA applies to the education records of:

- Persons who reach the age of 18 or
- Persons who attend a postsecondary school and
- All educational agencies or institutions receiving funds under any program administered by the Secretary of Education.

The responsibility for administering FERPA has been assigned to the Family Compliance Office within the Department of Education. Educational institutions are required to develop policies for implementing appropriate provisions of FERPA. On many college campuses, the Registrar has been delegated the responsibility to insure that information from educational records is released only to those individuals and agencies that:

- have a **legitimate educational interest** or
- have been granted **legally authorized access**.

However, other college and university officials also play an important role in the privacy and security of records. Identity theft, credentials fraud, and other illegal activities have heightened sensibilities and now place a responsibility on **all** to insure that student data are used only for intended purposes. **Maintaining confidentiality of student records is everyone's responsibility.**

WHAT IS A STUDENT EDUCATIONAL RECORD ?

Just about any information provided by a student to the university for use in the educational process is considered a student educational record

- personal information
- enrollment records
- grades
- schedules

Student educational record may be:

- a document in the registrar's office
- a computer printout in your office
- a class list on your desktop
- a computer display screen
- notes you have taken during an advisement session

What information is considered Directory Information or public ?

As defined by SUNY Cortland, directory information consists of:

- Name
- Permanent address
- Telephone number(s) (other than local number as listed in the Campus Information Directory)
- SUNY Cortland e-mail address
- Local telephone number as listed in Campus Information Directory
- Local Address as listed in Campus Information Directory
- Individual photograph or electronic image
- Class standing
- Age in years (does not include birthdates of individual student)
- Academic Major
- School of Study
- Dates of attendance
- Degree(s) earned
- Honors, awards, special recognitions, scholarships
- Participation in officially recognized college activities, events, and sports
- Height and weight (student athletes only)
- Student's most recent educational institution attended

Does this mean that everything else that is not directory (or public) is confidential ?

There are certain items that should NOT be considered "directory" and should never be released. This includes confidential items like:

- Social Security Number
- Grade Point Average (GPA)
- Academic Standing
- Grades

Other items as defined by SUNY Cortland are:

- Email addresses that are not assigned by SUNY Cortland
- Date and place of birth
- Campus ID or digital identity
- Citizenship
- Race
- Gender
- Religion
- Schedule of classes
- Withdrawal date
- Vehicle registration plate number
- Driver's license number
- Credit card numbers
- Criminal record
- Name(s) of student family members
- Address(es) of student family members

To learn more about FERPA . . .

<http://www2.cortland.edu/ferpa/>