

# WHAT EVERY PARENT SHOULD KNOW ABOUT FERPA

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## **WHAT IS FERPA?**

FERPA is the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act*. It is a federal law that protects the privacy of student educational records.

## **WHO DOES FERPA PROTECT?**

FERPA protects students who are or have been in attendance at post-secondary institutions, regardless of age by keeping their educational records private.

## **WHAT ARE EDUCATIONAL RECORDS?**

Educational records, according to FERPA, are documents or materials that are maintained by the university, which are directly related to a student, allowing the student to be identified. Almost all academic, financial, and administrative information (both print and electronic) falls under this act.

## **WHAT INFORMATION CAN BE RELEASED?**

Directory information is an exception to FERPA's privacy protection. Directory information can be released by the University to third parties without consent unless the Registrar's Office receives written notification from the student that he/she does not want the information published. Directory information is that which would not be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy. The Registrar's Office considers the following to be directory information:

- Name, address, and telephone number
- Age and date of birth
- Level of education, academic major, and degrees received
- Educational institution where the student was most recently enrolled
- Degrees, honors, and awards received
- E-mail address
- Participation in sports or other activities and height and weight of athletes.

Other educational records can be released if the university receives a signed and dated waiver form from the student. This form must reference the specific records allowed to be released, the purpose for disclosure, and the identity of the person/people to whom the information can be released to. In addition, most educational records can be shared within the university as long as the individuals have legitimate educational interests, or a need to review the information in order to fulfill his/her job responsibilities. The release form can be found at <http://sdcl.wayne.edu/RegistrarWeb/Forms/Resources/FERPA.pdf>.

## **WHAT ARE A STUDENT'S RIGHTS UNDER FERPA?**

FERPA provides students with the following rights:

- The right to inspect and review all educational records.
- The right to request the amendment of records that may be inaccurate.
- The right to limit disclosure of information from their records.
- Annual notification of their right to inspect, amend and consent to disclosures.
- The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education in regard to alleged failures of WSU to comply with FERPA.

## **WHAT ARE PARENT'S RIGHTS UNDER FERPA?**

At the University level, parents do not have a right to inspect their student's educational records. Parents who wish to access their student's records must have their student sign a written consent form authorizing the release of specific information, like grade or disciplinary information, to the parents.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Q:** *Can my student give me permission to access grades or other aspects of educational records maintained by the university?*

**A:** Yes. Written permission from the student can give you access to whatever educational records the student agrees to let you view. For more information about this waiver and what information it must include please contact the Office of Records and Registration at (313) 577-3531.

**Q:** *Why do I have limited access to my son/daughter's college records when I am paying his/her college expenses?*

**A:** FERPA states that when a child becomes an "eligible student" (who either just turned 18 or is now attending a college or university), he/she has the right to keep his/her educational records private, even from their parents. The best approach to obtaining educational records from your student is to ask them directly. As students get accustomed to the college lifestyle and begin taking more responsibility for their own actions they are more likely to be willing to share information with you.

**Q:** *What if my student does not want certain directory information published?*

**A:** The student must provide written notification that he/she would like the directory information to remain confidential. The form is available at: <http://sdcl.wayne.edu/registrar/resources/release.pdf>. This form must be completed and submitted to the university Registrar's Office before any action will be taken by the university to keep the information from the public.

**Q:** *Where can I get more information about FERPA?*

**A:** The U.S. Department of Education enforces FERPA. The department maintains a FERPA web site with many resources for parents, students, faculty, and staff at: <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>.

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