

Geisinger Commonwealth
School of Medicine



FERPA Basics
Edward Lahart
Registrar

Updated: 2017

Who is protected under FERPA?

The rights under FERPA apply to eligible students.

An eligible student is an individual who has reached 18 years of age or is/has been in attendance at GCSOM.

What is directory information?

Information, the release of which is not normally considered a violation of a person's privacy.

May be disclosed without a student's written consent unless a student has requested that this information not be released.

What information is considered directory information?

Name (including both maiden name and married name, where applicable)

Address, telephone listing, and electronic mail address

Date and place of birth

Major field of study

Anticipated graduation date

Enrollment Status (undergraduate or graduate, full-time or part-time)

Dates of attendance

Degrees and awards received

Participation in officially recognized sports and activities

Weight and height (members of athletic teams)

What else should I know about directory information?

If you do not have a way of knowing whether or not a student has requested confidentiality of directory information, **do not release it.**

Just because you may, does not mean you should.

What else should I know about directory information? Continued.

- The college considers a student's right to privacy to be very important and does not routinely share directory information with third parties.
- To request that directory information be made confidential, the student should notify (in writing) the Office of the Registrar.
- If a student requests confidentiality of directory information, it is all-or-nothing. In other words, not even the student's name will appear in on-line directories.

What constitutes a student's education record?

The definition of an education record under FERPA is broad.

It essentially refers to any record that is directly related to a student and that is kept by the College or someone acting on behalf of the College from which an individual student, or students, can be personally (individually) identified.

What constitutes a student's education record? Continued.

This can include: files, documents and materials in any medium (handwritten, tape, disks, film, microfilm, microfiche, etc.)

Written permission must be obtained from a student before releasing an education record, unless the request fits certain narrow exceptions.

When in doubt, assume that the item, if it relates to a student, is an education record and seek further assistance.

What are the student's rights under FERPA?

- Subject to FERPA exclusions, 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 U.S. Department of Education.

What about a spouse?

The spouse has no rights under FERPA to access the student's education record.

What about parents?

- When a student reaches the age of 18 or begins attending a postsecondary institution regardless of age, FERPA rights transfer to the student.
- Parents may obtain directory information at the discretion of the institution.
- Parents may obtain non-directory information (grades, GPA, etc.) only at the discretion of the institution AND after it has been documented that their child is legally their dependent.

What about parents? Continued.

- The Office of Undergraduate Studies maintains signed consent from students who have chosen to allow release of non-directory information to parents.
- Parents of undergraduate students should be referred to the Office of Undergraduate Studies.

Important Reminders – DON'Ts

Do not display student scores or grades publicly in association with names, student ID numbers (even the last 4 digits of the SSN) or other personal identifiers.

Do not put papers or lab reports containing student names and grades in publicly accessible places. Students should not have access to the scores and grades of others in the class.

Important Reminders – DON'Ts Continued.

Do not share student education record information, including grades or grade point averages, with other faculty or staff members of the University unless their official responsibilities identify their "legitimate educational interest" in that information for that student.

Important Reminders – DON'Ts Continued.

Do not share by phone or correspondence information from student education records, including grades or grade point averages, with parents or others outside the institution, including letters of recommendation, without written permission of the student.

Do not circulate a printed class list with the students' names and Social Security numbers as an attendance sheet.

Important Reminders - DOs

- DO** refer requests for information from educational record of a student to the proper educational record custodian, the Office of the Registrar.
- DO** keep only those individual student records necessary for the fulfillment of your job responsibilities.

Important Reminders – Dos Continued.

DO keep any personal professional records relating to individual students separate from their educational records.

DO change information in an educational record when the student is able to provide valid documentation that the information is inaccurate or misleading.

FERPA Best Practices

- Never circulate a class roster with student name and GCSOM ID or SSN as an attendance roster.
- In general, do not release any directory information to off-campus inquiries.
- Remember to check a student's restriction before you answer any questions.
- Remember to close any programs on your computer that contain student information when not at your desk.

FERPA Best Practices Continued.

- It is good practice to have a password on your screen saver so others cannot access your computer when it is on.
- When in doubt, error on the side of caution and contact the Office of the Registrar for guidance.

For more information contact...

Edward Lahart

Registrar

Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine

525 Pine Street

Scranton PA 18509

570-504-9668

570-504-2799 (fax)