

# FERPA: What You Need to Know

FERPA (the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) is a federal law that generally protects the privacy of student records and information, and it applies to all educational institutions receiving federal funding.

Grants four specific rights to University students:

1. to review education records that the institution keeps on the student;
2. to seek amendment of those records if inaccurate;
3. to consent in writing before their education records are disclosed to others (unless an exception applies);
4. to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education's Family Policy Compliance Office for violations of FERPA.

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## Definitions

FERPA protects the privacy of "education records" and personally identifiable student information therein.

Education records are: Records directly related to a student and maintained by the University.

The following are NOT considered educational records: directory information; law enforcement records; medical treatment records; alumni records (created after the student's departure from the University); employee records; sole possession records.

Directory information is: information about a student that would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. Directory information is considered public information and can be released without a student's written permission, unless the student has opted to keep their directory information confidential. The University has designated the following as directory information: name; address and phone number (both permanent and current); University email address; academic awards and honors; class/level; dates of attendance; degree(s) earned/date; full/part time status; major(s)/degree program(s); photograph/other visual image; prior post-secondary institutions attended; and school/college.

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## Right to Review and Inspect

Students have the right to inspect and review their own education records, except for certain limited categories. Access must be granted no later than 45 days from the date of the request. All requests to review and inspect education records should be coordinated with and through the Registrar's Office. Questions should be directed to the Registrar's Office or the Office of University Counsel.

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## Right to Amend

Students may request amendment of any inaccurate or misleading information in their education records. Requests to amend education records should be made through the Registrar's Office. The right to amend factual inaccuracies does NOT include a right to challenge grades, opinion, or substantive decisions made by the University concerning the student.

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## Right to Consent

Consent that specifies what can be released, to whom, for what reasons must be obtained from students for the release of information from education records.

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## Right to File a Complaint

Students have the right to file complaints with the United States Department of Education if they believe the University has improperly disclosed personally identifiable information from their education records.

Complaints may be submitted to:  
Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202  
FERPA.complaints@ed.gov

# FERPA: What You Need to Know Continued

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## Faculty and Staff Practical Tips

Faculty and staff have a legal responsibility under FERPA to protect the privacy of students and student records.

### **Do:**

- Access student information only for completion of your responsibilities.
- Keep student records private and do not release education records or information contained therein without written consent (unless an exception applies).
- Store student information securely.
- Work with the Registrar's Office to respond to student requests to review and inspect their education records.
- Contact the Registrar's Office, Risk Management or the Office of University Counsel with questions.

### **Do Not:**

- Access education records for personal reasons or any reason outside your job duties.
  - Share student information without consent (or without an exception to consent).
  - Release directory information without checking to see if the student has requested suppression.
  - Store student information on portable devices.
  - Use Social Security Numbers or any portion of the SUID number in public postings.
  - Leave graded tests/papers unsecured.
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## Syracuse University

Registrar: Siham Doughman, registrar@syr.edu, 315.443.2422  
Risk Management: Michaele DeHart, mdehart@syr.edu, 315.443.2804  
University Counsel: Abby Perer, arperer@syr.edu, 315.443.8979