
Recordkeeping and Disclosure

In this chapter, we discuss the requirements for maintaining and disclosing records for the FSA programs.

The General Provisions regulations require schools to maintain records related to their participation in the FSA programs. These records must be made available by schools to representatives of the Department and other specified individuals or organizations in the course of audits, program reviews, investigations, or other authorized reviews.

In addition to the general institutional recordkeeping requirements discussed here, a school must also comply with all program-specific recordkeeping requirements contained in the individual FSA program regulations.

This chapter also describes the rules governing disclosure, including a discussion of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). FERPA restricts the disclosure of student records to other parties and requires the school to give a student the opportunity to review his or her records.

REQUIRED RECORDS

A school must keep comprehensive, accurate program and fiscal records related to its use of FSA program funds. The importance of maintaining complete, accurate records cannot be overemphasized. Program and fiscal records must demonstrate the school is capable of meeting the administrative and fiscal requirements for participating in the FSA programs. In addition, records must demonstrate proper administration of FSA program funds and must show a clear *audit trail* for FSA program expenditures. For example, **records for each FSA recipient must clearly show that the student was eligible for the funds received, and that the funds were disbursed in accordance with program regulations.**

The FSA Assessment module

that can assist you in understanding and assessing in your compliance with the provisions of this chapter is "Reporting and Reconciling," at

<http://ifap.ed.gov/qamodule/ReportingReconciling/AssessmentPage4.html>

Recordkeeping cite

34 CFR 668.24

Program records

A school must establish and maintain on a current basis any application the school submitted for FSA program funds. A school must also maintain on a current basis program records that document:

- the school's eligibility to participate in the FSA programs,
- the FSA eligibility of the school's programs of education,
- the school's administration of the FSA programs,
- the school's financial responsibility,
- information included in any application for FSA program funds, and
- the school's disbursement of FSA program funds.

Program Records a School Must Maintain

The program records that a school must maintain include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ Program Participation Agreement
- ✓ Application portion of the FISAP
- ✓ Accrediting and licensing agency reviews, approvals, and reports
- ✓ State agency reports
- ✓ Audit and program review reports
- ✓ Self-evaluation reports
- ✓ Other records, as specified in regulation, that pertain to factors of financial responsibility and standards of administrative capability

Fiscal records

A school must keep fiscal records to demonstrate its proper use of FSA funds. A school's fiscal records must provide a clear audit trail that shows that funds were received, managed, disbursed, and returned in accordance with federal requirements. Schools are required to account for the receipt and expenditure of all FSA program funds in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

A school must establish and maintain on a current basis:

- financial records that reflect each FSA program transaction, and
- general ledger control accounts and related subsidiary accounts that identify each FSA program transaction and separate those transactions from all other school financial activity.

Fiscal Records a School Must Maintain

The fiscal records that a school must maintain include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ Records of all FSA program transactions
- ✓ Bank statements for all accounts containing FSA funds
- ✓ Records of student accounts, including each student’s institutional charges, cash payments, FSA payments, cash disbursements, refunds, returns, and overpayments required for each enrollment period
- ✓ General ledger (control accounts) and related subsidiary ledgers that identify each FSA program transaction (FSA transactions must be separate from school’s other financial transactions)
- ✓ Federal Work-Study payroll records
- ✓ FISOP portion of the FISAP
- ✓ Records that support data appearing on required reports, such as:
 - Pell Grant Statements of Accounts
 - GAPS cash requests and quarterly or monthly reports
 - FSA program reconciliation reports
 - Audit reports and school responses
 - State grant and scholarship award rosters and reports
 - Accrediting and licensing agency reports
 - Records used to prepare the *Income Grid* on the FISAP

Loan Program Records

There are special record keeping requirements in the Direct and FFEL loan programs. A school must maintain —

- A copy of paper or electronic loan certification or origination record, including the amount of the loan and the period of enrollment.
- The cost of attendance, estimated financial assistance, and estimated family contribution used to calculate the loan amount (and any other information that may be required to determine the borrower’s eligibility, such as the student’s Federal Pell Grant eligibility or ineligibility).
- The date(s) the school disbursed the loan funds to the student (or to the parent borrower), and the amount(s) disbursed. (For loans delivered to the school by check, the date the school endorsed each loan check, if required.)

Loan program record cite

34 CFR 668.24, 34 CFR 682.610, and
34 CFR 685.309(c)

- Documentation of the confirmation process for each academic year in which the school uses the multi-year feature of the Master Promissory Note. This may be part of the borrower's file, but acceptable documentation can also include a statement of the confirmation process that was printed in a student handbook or other financial aid publication for that school year. The documentation may be kept in paper or electronic form. There is no retention limit for this documentation; you must keep it indefinitely because it may affect the enforceability of loans.

A school must keep records relating to a student or parent borrower's eligibility and participation in the Direct Loan or FFEL program for three years after the end of the award year in which the student last attended the school. A school must keep all other records relating to the school's participation in the Direct Loan or FFEL program for at least three years after the end of the award year in which the records are submitted.

Records of the schools administration of the FSA programs

A school must maintain the records that pertain to its administration of FSA program funds (listed on the chart on the following page.)

In addition, participants in the:

- Perkins Loan Program must follow procedures in Section 674.19 for documenting the repayment history for each borrower for that program (see Volume 6 – Campus-Based Programs); and
- FWS Program must follow procedures established in Section 675.19 for documentation of work, earnings, and payroll transactions for the program (see Volume 6 – Campus-Based Programs).

Records of the school's administration of the FSA programs

A school must maintain records for each FSA recipient that include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ The Student Aid Report (SAR) or Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR) used to determine a student's eligibility for FSA program funds
- ✓ Application data submitted to the Department, lender, or guaranty agency by the school on behalf of the student or parent
- ✓ Documentation of each student's or parent borrower's eligibility for FSA program funds (e.g., records that demonstrate that the student has a high school diploma, GED, or the ability to benefit)
- ✓ Documentation of all professional judgment decisions
- ✓ Financial aid history information for transfer students
- ✓ Cost of attendance information
- ✓ Documentation of a student's satisfactory academic progress (SAP)
- ✓ Documentation of student's program of study and the courses in which the student was enrolled
- ✓ Data used to establish student's admission, enrollment status, and period of enrollment
- ✓ Required student certification statements and supporting documentation
- ✓ Documents used to verify applicant data, and resolve conflicting information
- ✓ Documentation relating to each student's or parent borrower's receipt of FSA program funds, including but not limited to:
 - The amount of the grant, loan, or FWS award; its payment period; its loan period, if appropriate; and the calculations used to determine the amount of grant, loan, or FWS award;
 - The date and amount of each disbursement of grant or loan funds, and the date and amount of each payment of FWS wages;
 - The amount, date, and basis of the school's calculation of any refunds/returns or overpayments due to or on behalf of the student; and
 - The payment of any refund/return or overpayment to the FSA program fund, a lender, or the Department, as appropriate.
- ✓ Documentation of and information collected at any initial or exit loan counseling required by applicable program regulations

In addition, a school must maintain records that include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ Reports and forms used by the school in its participation in an FSA program, and any records needed to verify data that appear in those reports and forms
- ✓ Documentation supporting the school's calculation of its completion or graduation rates, and transfer-out rates (see chapter 6).

RECORD RETENTION PERIODS

Records cite

34 CFR 668.24
34 CFR 668.27

Retaining FISAP records

Schools must keep the Fiscal Operations Report (FISAP) and any records necessary to support their data (e.g., the source data for the income grid) for three years from the end of the award year in which the FISAP is submitted.

The most current FISAP, which will contain 2004-2005 data, must be submitted during the 2005-2006 award year, will request 2006-2007 funds, and has a submission date of October 2005. Because this FISAP will be submitted during the 2005-2006 award year, records must be kept until at least June 30, 2009, three years from the last day of the 2005-2006 award year.



If an additional location or branch of an institution closes and borrowers who attended the school obtain loan discharges by reason of the closure of the location or branch (or improper ATB or loan certifications), the Department will pursue recovery against the larger institution.

If a school has an additional location or branch that closes, the school might want to maintain its loan records beyond the end of the three-year record retention requirement in order to respond to the Department or to refute borrower claims of eligibility for discharge.

Schools must retain all required records for a minimum of three years from the end of the award year. However, the starting point for the three-year period is not the same for all records. For example, some Campus-Based program records must be kept for three years from the end of the award year in which the funds were awarded and disbursed.

Different retention periods are necessary to ensure enforcement and repayment of FSA loans. Perkins Loan repayment records, including cancellation and deferment records, must be kept for three years from the date that the loan was assigned to the Department, cancelled, or repaid. Perkins original promissory notes and original repayment schedules must be kept until the loan is satisfied or needed to enforce the obligation (for more information, see *Volume 6 – Campus-Based Programs*). Records relating to a borrower's eligibility and participation in the FFEL and Direct Loan programs must be kept for three years from the last day of the award year in which the student last attended the school.

There are also additional record retention requirements that apply to schools granted waivers of the audit submission requirements.

The chart on the next page illustrates the required minimum retention periods for records under the various FSA programs.

A school may retain records longer than the minimum period required. Moreover, a school may be required to retain records involved in any loan, claim, or expenditure questioned in any FSA program review, audit, investigation, or other review, for more than three years (see chapter 12 for information on program reviews and audits). If the three-year retention period expires before the issue in question is resolved, the school must continue to retain all records until resolution is reached.

Minimum Record Retention Periods

FSA Program	<i>End of the award year in which the report was submitted</i>	<i>End of the award year for which the aid was awarded</i>	<i>End of the award year in which the student last attended</i>	<i>The loan is satisfied or the documents are needed to enforce the obligation</i>	<i>The date on which a loan is assigned to the Department, cancelled, or repaid</i>
Campus-based and Pell Grant		3 YEARS			
Except:					
• Fiscal Operations Report (FISAP) and supporting records	3 YEARS				
• Perkins repayment records (after 12/87, includes original repayment schedule, though manner of retention remains same as promissory note)					3 YEARS
• Perkins original promissory notes (before 12/87, included original repayment schedule)				UNTIL	
FFEL and Direct Loans					
• Records related to borrower's eligibility and participation			3 YEARS		
• All other records, including any other reports or forms	3 YEARS				

RECORD MAINTENANCE

Acceptable formats

A school must maintain all required records in a systematically organized manner. Unless a specific format is required, a school may keep required records in

- hard copy
- optical disk
- microform
- CD-ROM
- computer file
- other media formats

Record retention requirements for the Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR) are discussed later in this chapter. All other record information, regardless of the format used, must be retrievable in a coherent hard copy format (for example, an easily understandable printout of a computer file) or in a media format acceptable to the Department. The requirement providing for other media formats acceptable to the Department allows for the use of new technology as it is developed. The Department will notify schools of acceptable media formats; schools should not apply for approval of a media format.

Closed-school records

If a school closes, stops providing educational programs, is terminated or suspended from the FSA programs, or undergoes a change in ownership that results in a change of control, it must provide for the retention of required records. It must also provide for access to those records for inspection and copying by the Department. For a school that participates in the FFEL Program, the school must also provide access for the appropriate guaranty agency.

Safeguarding electronic records

As schools begin developing plans for using electronic recordkeeping in administering other FSA programs, they should keep in mind the safeguards required for electronic certification in the FWS program. Those safeguards include:

- password protection,
- password changes at set intervals,
- access revocation for unsuccessful log-ins,
- user identification and entry point tracking,
- random audit surveys with supervisors, and
- security tests of the code access.

Any document that contains a signature, seal, certification, or any other image or mark required to validate the authenticity of its information must be maintained in its original hard copy or in an imaged media format. This includes tax returns, verification statements, and Student Aid Reports (SARs) used to determine eligibility, and any other document when a signature seal, etc., contained on it is necessary for the document to be used for the purposes for which it is being retained.

A school may maintain a record in an imaged media format only if the format is capable of reproducing an accurate, legible, and complete copy of the original document. When printed, the copy must be approximately the same size as the original document.

Please note that promissory notes that are signed electronically, must be maintained electronically in accordance with the requirements of 34 CFR 668.24(d)(3)(i) through (iv).

Special requirements for SARs and ISIRs

Special maintenance and availability requirements apply for SARs and ISIRs used to determine eligibility. It is essential that these basic eligibility records be available in a consistent, comprehensive, and verifiable format for program review and audit purposes.

Because the SAR is a hard copy document, it must be maintained and available in its original hard copy format or in an imaged media format. The ISIR, an electronic record, must be maintained and available in its original format, i.e., as it was supplied by the Department to the school on a magnetic tape or cartridge, or as it was archived using EDEExpress software supplied to the school. A school that uses EDEExpress has the ability to preserve the ISIR data that it has maintained during the applicable award year by archiving the data to a disk or other computer format. A school that receives ISIRs on magnetic tapes or cartridges may make a copy of the file received from the Department.

EXAMINATION OF RECORDS

Location

A school must make its records available to the Department at a location of the institution designated by the Department. These records must be readily available for review, including any records of transactions between a school and the financial institution where the school deposits any FSA funds.

A school is not required to maintain records in any specific location. For example, it may be more appropriate for a school to maintain some records in the financial aid office while maintaining others in the business office, the admissions office, or the office of the registrar. The responsible administrator in the office maintaining the records should be aware of all applicable record retention requirements.

Cooperation with agency representatives

A school that participates in any FSA program, and the school's third-party servicers, if any, must cooperate with the agencies and individuals involved in conducting any audit, program review, investigation, or other review authorized by law. This cooperation must be extended to the following individuals and their authorized representatives: an independent auditor, the Secretary of the Department of Education, the Department's Inspector General, and the Comptroller General of the United States. A school must also provide this cooperation to any guaranty agency in whose program the school participates, and to the school's accrediting agency.

Timely access

A school must cooperate by providing timely access to requested records, pertinent books, documents, papers, or computer programs for examination and copying by any of the agents listed above. The records to which timely access must be provided include, but are not limited to, computerized records and records reflecting transactions with any financial institution with which the school or servicer deposits or has deposited any FSA program funds.

FSA recipient information

If requested by the Department, a school or servicer must provide promptly any information the school or servicer has regarding the last known address, full name, telephone number, enrollment information, employer, and employer address of a recipient of FSA program funds who attends or attended the school. A school must also provide this information, upon request, to a lender or guaranty agency in the case of a borrower under the FFEL Program.

REASONABLE ACCESS TO PERSONNEL

A school must also provide reasonable access to all personnel associated with the school's or servicer's administration of the FSA programs so that any of the agents listed above may obtain relevant information.

A school or servicer has not provided reasonable access to personnel if the school or servicer

- refuses to allow those personnel to supply all relevant information,
- permits interviews with those personnel only if the school's or servicer's management is present, or
- permits interviews with those personnel only if the interviews are tape-recorded by the school or servicer.

FSA RECIPIENT INFORMATION

If requested by the Department, a school or servicer must provide promptly any information the school or servicer has respecting the last known address, full name, telephone number, enrollment information, employer, and employer address of a recipient of FSA program funds who attends or attended the school. A school must also provide this information, upon request, to a lender or guaranty agency in the case of a borrower under the FFEL Program.

The FERPA library located at

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/library/index.html>

contains significant letters of interest issued on FERPA.

DISCLOSING STUDENT INFORMATION

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

To protect the privacy of students and families, federal law sets certain conditions on the disclosure of personal information from records kept by schools that participate in the FSA programs. The relevant law is the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974. Do not confuse FERPA with the Privacy Act of 1974 that governs the records kept by government agencies, including the application records in the federal processing system.

FERPA restrictions on disclosure of records that are created and maintained by campus law enforcement units (for law enforcement purposes) are discussed in chapter 6.

Department regulations set limits on the disclosure of personally identifiable information from school records, define the responsibilities of the school, and define the rights of the student to review the records and request a change to the records. Under FERPA, a school is required to provide a student with an opportunity to inspect and review his or her education records within 45 days of the receipt of a request. A school is required to provide the student with copies of

Conditions for disclosure under FERPA cite

34 CFR 99.30

Third-party housing records

Whether the rent is paid to the third party by the school on behalf of the student or directly by the student, a student housing facility owned by a third party that has a contract with a school to provide housing for the school's students is considered "under the control" of the school. Therefore, records (maintained by either the third-party or the school) related to the students living in that housing are subject to FERPA.

education records, or make other arrangements to provide the student access to the records, if a failure to do so would effectively prevent the student from obtaining access to the records. While the school may not charge a fee for retrieving the records, it may charge a reasonable fee for providing copies of the records, provided that the fee would not prevent access to the records.

In certain situations, a school may disclose personally identifiable information from an education record of a student without the student's consent. A school may disclose personally identifiable information without prior consent if the disclosure is —

- to other school officials, including teachers, within the school whom the school has determined to have legitimate educational interests; or,
- subject to the requirements of 34 CFR 99.34, to officials of another school, school system, or institution of postsecondary education where the student seeks or intends to enroll.

The graphic below notes several important elements of the school's responsibilities and the rights of the student. The regulations apply to all education records the school keeps, including admissions records (only if the student was admitted) and academic records as well as any financial aid records pertaining to the student. Therefore, the financial aid office is not usually the office that develops the school's FERPA policy or the notification to students and parents, although it may have some input.

Prior consent not required cite

34 CFR 99.31

A school is required to —

- ◆ annually notify students of their rights under FERPA;
- ◆ include in that notification the procedure for exercising their rights to inspect and review education records; and
- ◆ maintain a record in a student's file listing to whom personally identifiable information was disclosed and the legitimate interests the parties had in obtaining the information (does not apply to school officials with a legitimate educational interest or to directory information).

A student has the right to —

- ◆ inspect and review any education records pertaining to the student;
 - ◆ request an amendment to his/her records; and
 - ◆ request a hearing (if the request for an amendment is denied) to challenge the contents of the education records, on the grounds that the records are inaccurate, misleading, or violate the rights of the student.
-

Request to disclose information cite

34 CFR 99.30



HIPPA and FERPA

HIPPA applies to - health care providers, private benefit health plans, and health care clearinghouses. It does not apply to other types of organizations whose receipt or maintenance of health records is incidental to their normal course of business.

FERPA does not limit what records a school may obtain, create, or maintain. It provides safeguards for education records.

Your schools' Office of Disability Services (ODS) normally obtains and maintains health records for each student who applies for services or waivers. So, the receipt and maintenance of health records by students services' units is well established.

If a health record is used to make a decision in regard to a student's education program, (e.g., whether a student should - receive extended time for testing; or be exempt from an academic requirement, such as SAP) the health record may be construed to be an education record. In that case the normal FERPA provisions for safeguarding the record would apply.



In most cases, a student receiving a waiver from a school's SAP rules would also have applied for services from the ODS. Since most financial aid offices are not used to handling medical records, why not have the ODS maintain the record? That way all you have to do is reference the ODS record in the FA file. (Of course, you will have to ensure that the record maintenance requirements are complied with.)

What constitutes written consent

Except under one of the special conditions described below, a student must provide a signed and dated written consent before an education agency or school may disclose personally identifiable information from the student's education records.

The written consent must

- state the purpose of the disclosure;
- specify the records that may be disclosed;
- identify the party or class of parties to whom the disclosure may be made; and
- be signed and dated.

Recently, the FERPA regulations have been amended to allow that request to be made electronically. In addition to the aforementioned information, the consent form must

- identify and authenticate a particular person as the source of the electronic consent; and
- indicate that person's approval of the information contained in the electronic consent.

Additional Privacy Requirements

The Federal Trade Commission has ruled that most colleges are subject to the provisions of the Financial Services Act's Security Provisions (also known as the Financial Services Modernization Act). In the regulation, the commission created a definition of financial institutions that includes most colleges on the basis of the financial relationships they have with students, donors, and others. Consequently, colleges must draft detailed policies for handling financial data covered by the law, such as parents' annual income, and must take steps to protect the data from falling into the wrong hands.

Financial institutions, including postsecondary institutions, are required to have adopted an information security program by May 23, 2003, under the FTC rule. For specific requirements, see the box on "FTC Standards for Safeguarding Customer Information" on the following pages.

Thus, while schools have maximum flexibility in choosing a system that provides for electronic requests for release of personally identifiable information, they must ensure that their systems provide adequate safeguards.

FTC Standards for Safeguarding Customer Information

Postsecondary educational institutions participating in the FSA programs are subject to the information security requirements established by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) for financial institutions.

Customer information that must be safeguarded

These requirements apply to all customer information in your school's possession, regardless of whether such information pertains to students, parents, or other individuals with whom your school has a customer relationship, or pertains to the customers of other financial institutions that have provided such information to you.

Customer information means any record containing *nonpublic personal information* (see definition *) about a customer of a financial institution, whether in paper, electronic, or other form, that is handled or maintained by or on behalf of you or your affiliates.

* *Definition of "nonpublic personal information"*: Personally identifiable financial information; and any list, description, or other grouping of consumers (and publicly available information pertaining to them) that is derived using any personally identifiable financial information that is not publicly available.

Establishing & maintaining an information security program

As a financial institution covered under these information security requirements, your school must develop, implement, and maintain a comprehensive *information security program*.

* *Definition of "information security program"*: the administrative, technical, or physical safeguards you use to access, collect, distribute, process, protect, store, use, transmit, dispose of, or otherwise handle customer information

The information security program must be written in one or more readily accessible parts and contain administrative, technical, and physical safeguards that are appropriate to the size and complexity of the school, the nature and scope of its activities, and the sensitivity of any customer information at issue.

The safeguards shall be reasonably designed to achieve the following objectives:

- Insure the security and confidentiality of customer information,
- Protect against any anticipated threats or hazards to the security or integrity of such information, and
- Protect against unauthorized access to or use of such information that could result in substantial harm or inconvenience to any customer.

Required elements of an information security program

Designated coordinators. Your school must designate an employee or employees to coordinate its information security program.

Risk Assessment. Your school must identify reasonably foreseeable internal and external risks to the security, confidentiality, and integrity of customer information that could result in the unauthorized disclosure, misuse, alteration, destruction, or other compromise of such information, and assess the sufficiency of any safeguards in place to control these risks.

At a minimum, the school's risk assessment should include consideration of risks in each relevant area of your operations, including:

- Employee training and management,
- Information systems, including network and software design, as well as information processing, storage, transmission, and disposal, and
- Detecting, preventing, and responding to attacks, intrusions, or other systems failures.

Safeguards & Testing/Monitoring. Your school must design and implement information safeguards to control the risks you identify through risk assessment, and regularly test or otherwise monitor the effectiveness of the safeguards' key controls, systems, and procedures.

Evaluation & Adjustment. Your school must evaluate and adjust its information security program in light of the results of the required testing and monitoring, as well as for any material changes to your operations or business arrangements or any other circumstances that it has reason to know may have a material impact on your school's information security program.

Overseeing service providers. A service provider is any person or entity that receives, maintains, processes, or otherwise is permitted access to customer information through its provision of services directly to your school. Your school must take reasonable steps to select and retain service providers that are capable of maintaining appropriate safeguards for the customer information at issue and require your service providers by contract to implement and maintain such safeguards.

Effective dates

Your school was required to implement an information security program that meets these requirements no later than May 23, 2003.

The FTC regulations include a "grandfathering" provision for contracts made with nonaffiliated third parties to perform services for your school or functions on your school's behalf; this provision expired on May 24, 2004.

Sources:

FTC regulations: 16 CFR 313.3(n) and 16 CFR 314.1-5

Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act: Sections 501 and 505(b)(2)

US Code: 15 U.S.C. 6801(b), 6805(b)(2).

Education Records and their release

The term *education record* does **not** include records that are kept in the sole possession of the maker of the record (often called sole possession records). Sole possession records are

1. used as a memory or reference tool,
2. not accessible or revealed to any other person except a temporary substitute for the maker of the record, and
3. typically maintained by the school official unbeknownst to other individuals.

Records that contain information taken directly from a student or that are used to make decisions about the student are not sole possession records.

The FERPA regulations also establish rules governing the disclosure of student information to parties other than the student. The regulation lists a number of conditions under which *personally identifiable information* from a student's education record may be disclosed without the student's prior written consent. Several of these conditions are of particular interest to the financial aid office.

- Disclosure may be made if it is in connection with financial aid that the student has received or applied for. Such a disclosure may only be made if the student information is needed to determine the amount of the aid, the conditions for the aid, the student's eligibility for the aid, or to enforce the terms or conditions of the aid.
- Disclosure may be made to employees of the Department's Office of Federal Student Aid, Office of the Inspector General, and other federal, state, and local education authorities in connection with financial aid and for the enforcement of FSA laws and regulations relating to student aid.
- Disclosure may be made to authorized representatives of the Department of Education, including employees of the Department as well as research firms under contract with the Department, to evaluate financial aid procedures using student information provide by the schools selected for the study (including FSA Public Inquiry Contractor (PIC)).

Financial aid application cite

34 CFR 99.31(a)(4)

Government offices cite

34 CFR 99.31(a)(4).

ED's representatives

34 CFR 99.31(a)(3).



FERPA and Subpoenas

In contrast to the exceptions to the notification and recordkeeping requirements granted for law enforcement purposes and described in chapter 6, educational agencies or institutions may disclose information pursuant to any other court order or lawfully issued subpoena only if the school makes a reasonable effort to notify the parent or eligible student of the order or subpoena in advance of compliance, so that the parent or eligible student may seek protective action. Additionally, schools must comply with FERPA's recordkeeping requirements under 34 CFR 99.32 when disclosing information pursuant to a standard court order or subpoena.

Health and safety exception cite

34 CFR 99.31(a)(10) & 34 CFR 99.36

Disclosure to parents cite

34 CFR 99.31(a)(8)



- An educational institution may release personally identifiable information on an F, J, or M nonimmigrant student to the Department of Homeland Security (formally the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS)) in compliance with the Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) program without violating FERPA.
- FERPA permits educational agencies and institutions to disclose — without consent or knowledge of the student or parent (if applicable) — personally identifiable information to the Attorney General of the United States or his designee in response to an *ex parte* order in connection with the investigation of a crime of terrorism. An *ex parte* order is an order issued by a court without notice to the adverse party.

When information is supplied to the Attorney General or his designee pursuant to an *ex parte* order, an institution is not required to record the disclosure of information from the student's education record or notify the student. Rather, the school may respond to the specific requirements contained in the *ex parte* order. Moreover, a school that supplies information pursuant to an *ex parte* order is not liable for that disclosure.

- A health and safety exception permits the disclosure of personally identifiable information from a student's record in case of an immediate threat to the health or safety of students or other individuals.
- Generally speaking, FERPA provides parents or eligible students with the right to access, amend, and provide consent for disclosure of education records. Eligible students are those who are at least 18 or who are attending a postsecondary institution. Thus, when a student turns 18 or attends a postsecondary institution, these collective rights under FERPA transfer to the student.

However, the law makes a limited exception for parents of dependent students as defined by the IRS. **Note that the IRS definition of a dependent is quite different from that of a dependent student for FSA purposes.** For IRS purposes, students are dependent if they are listed as dependents on their parent's income tax returns. The limited exception permits a school to disclose education records of an eligible student to parents if that student is a dependent student under the IRS laws. **(If the student is a dependent as defined by the IRS, disclosure may be made to either parent, regardless of which parent claims the student as a dependent).**

Though for students over the age of 18 parents may obtain the student's education records, they do not have the right to amend or provide consent for the release of such records. Those rights pass to the student exclusively when he or she turns 18 or begins attendance at a postsecondary institution.

There are two different FERPA provisions concerning the release of records relating to a *crime of violence*. One concerns the release to the *victim* of any *outcome* involving an *alleged* crime of violence (34 CFR 34 CFR 99.31(a)(13)). A separate provision (34 CFR 99.31(a)(14)) permits a postsecondary institution to disclose to anyone the final results of any disciplinary hearing against an alleged perpetrator of a crime of violence where that student was *found in violation* of the school's rules or policies with respect to such crime or offense.

Disclosure of requests for information

Schools are required to keep a record of each request for access and each disclosure of personally identifiable student information. The record must identify the parties who requested the information and their legitimate interest in the information. This record must be maintained in the student's file as long as the educational records themselves are kept. There are some exceptions to this requirement, and you can find them in the FERPA regulations at 34 CFR 99.32(d).

Schools are not required to notify a student in advance or keep a record of the disclosure when the disclosure of education records is made in compliance with subpoenas or court orders issued for certain law enforcement purposes. The waiver of the advance notification requirement applies only when the law enforcement subpoena or court order contains language that specifies that the subpoena or court order should not be disclosed. While 34 CFR 99.32 of the FERPA regulations generally requires that an educational institution maintain a record of all requests for access to and disclosures from education records, such recordation would not be required so long as the school was successful in its attempt to notify the student of a court order or lawfully issued subpoena in advance of compliance.

Recordkeeping requirement cite

34 CFR 99.32

Exception to prior disclosure and recordation requirements

Schools are not required to notify a student in advance or keep a record of the disclosure when the request is received in conjunction with *ex parte* orders and when this is specifically stated in the *ex parte* order. In addition, schools are not required to notify a student in advance or keep a record of the disclosure made in conjunction with a grand jury subpoena, and other law enforcement subpoenas when this is specifically stated in the subpoena.

Reminder

Sample disclosure statement

If student records are requested by Department reviewers in the course of a program review, for instance, the school **must document in each student's** file that the student's records were disclosed to representatives of the Department. The easiest way for the school to do this is to photocopy a statement to this effect and include it in each student's file. A statement such as the following would be appropriate for a review of the FSA programs conducted by a Department regional office.

These financial aid records were disclosed to representatives of the U.S. Department of Education, Region __, on (Month/Day/Year) to determine compliance with financial aid requirements, under 34 CFR Part 99.31(a)(4).

Redisclosure to other authorized parties

When student information has been disclosed under 99.31(a)(4) concerning a student's financial aid, that party may generally not redisclose that information to additional parties, unless the disclosure is made on behalf of the school and meets one of the conditions listed in 34 CFR 99.31 and the redisclosure is recorded by the school. However, when a program review finds evidence that a student may have fraudulently obtained aid, this information may be redisclosed to the Department's Office of Inspector General (OIG) under FERPA's provision permitting disclosures in connection with financial aid in order to enforce the terms and conditions of the aid (34 CFR 99.31(a)(4)). (Thus, the OIG would not have to make a separate request to the school for the same information.)

When redisclosure is anticipated, the additional parties to whom the information will be disclosed must be included in the record of the original disclosure. For instance, to continue the example for an FSA program review, the following statement might be added: *The School Eligibility Channel may make further disclosures of this information to the Department's Office of Inspector General, and to the U.S. Department of Justice, under 34 CFR 99.33(b).* Schools should check with the program review staff to find out if any redisclosure is anticipated.

As mentioned earlier, the financial aid office is usually not responsible for developing the school's FERPA policy. However, anyone involved in developing a school's policy or anyone who would like a copy of the Department's model notification for postsecondary schools, may review and download the notification from the Family Policy Compliance Office Web site at

www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/index/html

Limitations on redisclosure cite

34 CFR 99.33



Ex Parte Orders

The recent amendment to FERPA permits educational agencies and institutions to disclose – without the consent or knowledge of the student or parent – personally identifiable information from the student’s education records to the Attorney General of the United States or to his designee in response to an *ex parte* order in connection with the investigation or prosecution of terrorism crimes specified in sections 2332b(g)(5)(B) and 2331 of title 18, U.S. Code. An *ex parte* order is an order issued by a court of competent jurisdiction without notice to an adverse party.

Lawfully issued subpoenas and court orders

FERPA permits educational agencies and institutions to disclose, without consent, information from a student’s education records in order to comply with a *lawfully issued subpoena or court order* in three contexts. These three contexts are:

1. Grand Jury Subpoenas – Educational agencies and institutions may disclose education records to the entity or persons designated in a Federal Grand Jury subpoena.
2. Law Enforcement Subpoenas – Educational agencies and institutions may disclose education records to the entity or persons designated in any other subpoena issued for a law enforcement purpose.

For these subpoenas, the court may order the school not to disclose to anyone the existence or contents of the subpoena or the school’s response. If the court so orders, then neither the prior notification requirements of 34 CFR 99.31(a)(9) nor the recordation requirements at 34 CFR 99.32 would apply. (In the case of an agency subpoena, the educational school has the option of requesting a copy of the good cause determination.)

3. Ex parte orders – Educational agencies and institutions may disclose, without consent or knowledge of the student or parent, personally identifiable information to the Attorney General of the United States or his designee in response to an *ex parte* order in connection with the investigation of a crime of terrorism. An *ex parte* order is an order issued by a court without notice to the adverse party.

Recordkeeping change pursuant to an ex parte order

In addition to allowing disclosure without prior written consent or prior notification, this provision amends FERPA’s recordkeeping requirements (20 U.S.C. 1232g(b)(4); 34 CFR 99.32). As a result, FERPA, as amended, does not require a school official to record a disclosure of information from a student’s education record when the school makes that disclosure pursuant to an “*ex parte*” order. Rather, the school may respond to the specific requirements contained in the “*ex parte*” order.

Furthermore, an educational agency or institution that, in good faith, produces information from education records in compliance with an “*ex parte*” order issued under the amendment “shall not be liable to any person for that production.”

Subpoena cites

20 U.S.C. 1232g(b)(1)(J)(i) and (ii), (b)(2)(B);
34 CFR. 99.31(a)(9)

All other subpoenas

In contrast to the exception to the notification and recordkeeping requirements described here, educational agencies or institutions may disclose information pursuant to any other court order or lawfully issued subpoena only if the school makes a reasonable effort to notify the parent or eligible student of the order or subpoena in advance of compliance, so that the parent or eligible student may seek protective action. Additionally, schools must comply with FERPA’s recordkeeping requirements under 34 CFR. 99.32 when disclosing information pursuant to a standard court order or subpoena.

Recordkeeping requirements for health and safety exceptions

FERPA's recordkeeping requirements apply to disclosures made pursuant to the health or safety exception.

Dear Colleague Letter

A Dear Colleague Letter on recent changes to FERPA is available at

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/pdf/hterrorism.pdf>

Health or safety emergency

The health or safety exception permits educational agencies and institutions to disclose personally identifiable information from a student's education record without the written consent of the student in the case of an immediate threat to the health or safety of students or other individuals. Typically, law enforcement officials, public health officials, and trained medical personnel are the types of parties to whom information may be disclosed under this FERPA exception.

The Department consistently has limited the health and safety exception to a specific situation that presents imminent danger or to a situation that requires the immediate need for information from education records in order to avert or diffuse serious threats to the safety or health of a student or other individuals. Any release must be narrowly tailored considering the immediacy, magnitude, and specificity of information concerning the emergency. Moreover, this exception is temporarily limited to the period of the emergency and generally will not allow for a blanket release of personally identifiable information from a student's education records.