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Subject: Tips for Database Backup Procedures and Scheduling

Dear Partner:

We would like to remind your school of the importance of backing up your Direct Loan database. Schools lose part or all of their data without having regularly backed up their data. Please don't let this happen to your school.

To protect your school in case of data loss due to a system failure or other disaster, all schools should establish procedures and a schedule for backing up data. When developing the procedures and schedule, consider the following tips:

1. *Work Volume*—Very large schools may need to back up their data twice daily to avoid losing more than a half day's work to a system failure. Smaller schools may consider a daily or weekly backup to be sufficient.

2. *Consecutive Backups*—In general, it is good to maintain at least two to three consecutive backups and rotate the backup media (hard drives, flash drives, CDs/DVDs, tape cartridges, etc.). If removable media is used (such as CD), do not back up to the same media each time. For example, back up data on a nightly basis and have media specifically designated by weekday (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, etc.). It may take some time to realize that your school's database has been corrupted and may require the use of a previous backup to restore the database.

3. *Backup Method*—Several methods and media are available to back up data. Use the method that is the easiest to perform and to maintain. For those on a school network, check with your school's network administrator to make sure backups are being performed on a regular basis. If your school uses a third party servicer to store your data, make sure your contract with the servicer includes having the servicer perform backups of your school's data on a regular basis. Do not back up the data onto the same hard drive / CD / tape cartridge that contains your school's regular data. If storage media is ever damaged, your school would lose both the regular and the backup data.

4. *Backup Type (full or a combination of full and incremental)*—For example, a school with a large database may choose to make a full backup of all data on Fridays and make incremental backups on the other days of the week. With an incremental backup, only the data that has changed since the last backup is included. Schools with relatively small databases and fast backup equipment may find it easier to just do a full backup each time.

5. ***Off-site Storage***—For maximum protection, keep at least one full backup copy off-site in case of fire or natural disaster.

6. ***Back Up Before Upgrading Software***—Back up your school's data before installing an upgraded version of the software. If a failure occurs during the installation that corrupts your school's data, it can easily be restored by using the backup file created before the failed installation.

7. ***Test The Backup***—At least once a year, take a backup and reload it on a computer system to make sure the backup works. For those on a school network, this should be part of your school's periodic disaster recovery exercises. If your school uses a third party servicer to store your data, make sure your contract with the servicer covers having the servicer test the readability of data backups at least annually.

If a school loses its EDExpress or other Direct Loan database, it may request a Direct Loan Rebuild file by contacting the COD School Relations Center at 800/848-0978. The Rebuild file will contain all accepted loan data COD has for that school at the time of the request. EDExpress schools can use the Rebuild file to rebuild Direct Loan module records in EDExpress for Windows databases. Non-EDExpress users can export data from a rebuilt EDExpress database to recreate non-EDExpress loans or databases. For information about the Rebuild file or on exporting from EDExpress to an external system and creating file formats, please refer to the [2006-2007 COD Technical Reference](#).

Schools should determine the backup procedures and schedule that best meet their needs. We hope these suggestions are helpful. Whether your school uses EDExpress or another software, remember: back up, back up, back up!

Thank you for your ongoing partnership in the Direct Loan Program.

Sincerely,

Bill Leith
General Manager, Program Operations Channel