



Elizabethtown College

## FERPA Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

FERPA gives students certain rights with respect to their educational records. These include the right to inspect the information in the record, the right to challenge pieces of information that might be inaccurate, and the right to designate whether information in the record can be disclosed to someone else.

The ***Educational Record*** includes a variety of information pertaining to a student and this information is generally organized into two categories.

1. One category consists of fairly general information that might normally be found in some published form, such as a directory. Schools can define what information falls into this category of **Directory Information** and this information can be released at the school's discretion as long as the student has not indicated that they want this directory information blocked.

**Directory Information**, as defined by Elizabethtown College, includes:

name; enrollment status (e.g., undergraduate or graduate; part-time or full-time); campus box; campus e-mail address; local and home address; local and home telephone; date and place of birth; dates of attendance; class (e.g., sophomore, junior); field of study; degree; date of graduation; participation in college-sponsored activities; honors; awards; participation in officially recognized sports and activities (including weights and heights of athletes); photographs; and most recently attended institution

If students block the release of Directory Information, then we would not be able to, for example, verify with an employer that they had obtained a degree, nor would they be recognized in their local paper if they attained Dean's List or some other honors.

2. The second category of information consists of **NON-Directory Information**: files and documents directly related to the student and maintained by Elizabethtown College that would not be released. **NON-Directory Information** includes everything that has not been specifically defined as Directory Information.

**None of the non-directory information in the Educational Record can be released to an outside person (including a parent or guardian) or organization without a student's written consent.** Students must complete the FERPA release form in order to grant a parent access to their Educational Record.

**Note that even if a FERPA release is signed, some information (e.g., counseling and health records) is further protected by other laws (e.g., HIPPA).**

## ~~~~~ **What Does FERPA Mean for Parents?** ~~~~~

Once a student turns 18 and/or is enrolled in college (whichever comes earlier), parents no longer have access to their Educational Records.

**Elizabethtown College defines students as enrolled beginning with check-in for their first semester (normally, the first day of fall orientation for new students).** At this time, all rights regarding educational records are transferred from parent to student.

**In order for a parent to gain access to their son's or daughter's Educational Record, Elizabethtown College requires that students provide written consent that clearly specifies that the college can release non-directory information to one or both parents.**

Students are informed of their FERPA rights and **given the opportunity to sign a release form during fall orientation.** Parents should talk their sons and daughters about this and encourage students to communicate openly about their academic performance and their participation in extracurricular activities during college.

If parents call or write to someone at the college with an inquiry about a son or daughter, that school official will first need to determine whether or not the student has signed a FERPA release form and specifically named that parent. This verification helps ensure that students' rights are not violated and information in the Educational Record is not mishandled.

If a student has NOT signed a FERPA release form, then the college cannot discuss or share information that is in a son's or daughter's Educational Record with parents. If this happens, parents are encouraged to talk with their son or daughter and encourage them to sign a release form, or better yet, encourage them to talk directly about their situation.

Keep in mind that a signed FERPA release form gives permission to institutions to disclose non-directory information, **but does not require that this information be disclosed.** Nor does a release shift the burden for disclosure to the institution. In other words, parents need to make a specific request for information. The office or individual being asked for the information may or may not believe that it is appropriate to provide the information to the parent. For example, some instructors may have a practice of discussing exam or paper grades with students only.

Additional information about FERPA is available from the U.S. Department of Education:

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>