

Section Two (2.6)

This section will cover FERPA in advisement.

Learning Outcomes

1. Describe consent to release as it relates to FERPA and education records.
2. Explain the purpose of the FERPA 'Consent to Release Information' form.
3. Summarize common situations where FERPA impacts advisement.

FERPA in Advisement

As introduced in Advising Foundations, The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (or FERPA) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. FERPA pertains to both the access to and release of students' personally identifiable information and education records.

Student Consent to Release Education Records

Consent to Release Education Records

Students must give their written consent in order for an advisor to release their information. The student must give consent for each person that they would like to have access to their educational records. Advisors may share information from educational records only with student authorized individuals. This is true for all students who are in attendance at the University, regardless of their age.

How does a student give consent to release information?

Students may give their written consent for an advisor to release their information by completing the 'Consent to Release Information' form. There is both an online and paper version of this form available to use. Students identify the individual that may release information, to whom and for how long the information may be shared.

For the online form, advisors should save the FERPA release form confirmation emails in a designated Outlook folder. The email confirmation should also be saved as a PDF and uploaded as a note in the student's Navigate profile. If a paper form is used, it should also be scanned and uploaded to Navigate. Both a link and a copy of this form can be found on the University Advising Center's website. Refer to your department for any additional departmental procedures related to the FERPA release form.

Guests Attending an Advising Appointment

There are times when a student will bring a guest to an advising appointment. While guests are often parents or guardians, they can also be a spouse or friend. Regardless, advisors may not continue the appointment and discuss student educational records with the guest present without first getting the student's written consent to release information.

What to do when a student brings a guest to an advising appointment

The following steps should be taken when a student brings a guest to an advising appointment:

1. Check to see if there is a FERPA release form on file. If there is a form on file that grants the advisor permission to release information to the guest, proceed with the appointment.
2. If there is no form on file, it is recommended that you do the following:

- First, speak with the student privately in your office to verify they understand their rights under FERPA and are okay with having protected information shared with the guest present.
- If the student approves the release information, have them complete the FERPA release form.
- Invite the guest into your office and briefly explain FERPA and the need to obtain student consent before the appointment could proceed.
- If the student does not approve the release of information, ask them how they would like to proceed with the appointment. You may continue a brief meeting with only the student and review general information with the guest present.

Phone or Email Requests for Student Information

What to do if someone calls or emails requesting information about a student?

When someone contacts you via phone or email to get information about a student, it's important to know that FERPA still applies. Since you cannot verify a person's identity by phone or email, advisors can use the following tips to guide the conversation:

1. Do not look up the student's profile in student information systems. This will allow you to avoid relaying FERPA protected information.
2. Share general information about university policies and procedures and program of study requirements.
3. Encourage the person to communicate directly with the student and suggest the student schedule an advising appointment to meet with you.

Common FERPA in Advisement Scenarios

Advisors may encounter a variety of FERPA related situations during their career. Below are some potential scenarios that might occur and guidance on what advisors can say or do in each.

Potential Scenarios	Guidance on What to Say
1. A parents is disgruntled and frustrated by FERPA regulations.	Express understanding and encourage the parent to view this as an opportunity to have meaningful dialogue with their student. Explain that the student now has the lead role in their education with increased responsibility and accountability.
2. The student denies the release of their information to guest that accompanied them to the appointment and a disagreement ensues.	Be empathetic and understanding to both parties' stance. Encourage the student and guest to move to a private area to have a discussion if necessary.
3. A parents worries that their student is failing one or more of their classes and will be suspended.	Explain the academic probation and suspension polices to the parent in broad terms without mentioning specifics about their student's record.
4. The student has a medical emergency and is not able to meet in person / speak to the advisor.	Advisors are still not able to give out student information even if the student is not able to give permission at the time. The advisor can discuss university policy that would apply to every student to try and help them as much as possible.

5. Someone calls as they have not been able to get in touch with their student and have been trying to reach them for a while.	Let them know that you are not able to give them information about the students schedule but that you will work on reaching the student, using various campus resources, and encouraging the student to get in touch with them.
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Please return to Blackboard and complete the quiz for this section. Once you complete the quiz with a score of 100% you will be able to proceed to the next section of this module.