



Maintaining Confidentiality and Security of Student Data

To protect the privacy of students and their families, school staff are legally and ethically responsible for safe-guarding the information collected about and from their students. Schools, school districts, and state education agencies maintain and use personal information for a variety of educational purposes while students are in school. Rights for students and parents and requirements for local education agencies are many and complex under the Family Educational Records and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Health Insurance Portability and Access Act (HIPAA).

When talking about data security, both the physical security of the data (preventing inappropriate taking of data) and confidentiality (protecting data to prevent the casual or deliberate imparting of private information through conversation or carelessness) are at issue. Security and confidentiality are issues that relate to paper records, electronic records, and conversations.

The following resources located on the National Center for Education Statistics Web support schools and districts in understanding the federal and state laws and regulations related to maintaining, protecting and releasing student information as well as providing examples of good policies and procedures to ensure the privacy of student information.

[Guide to Confidentiality](#) provides examples of policies and procedures as well as guidelines for deciding what is needed to ensure the privacy of student information.

[FERPA/HIPAA Quiz](#) gives educators a chance to test their understanding of these laws. The [FERPA/HIPAA Quiz Answer Key](#) provides answers and explanations.

[Examples of Data Security Best Practices](#) provides a checklist of good general and technical practices that includes password issues and physical security.

[Security and Confidentiality Lesson Plan](#) is one of four workshops that serve as an introduction to building a culture of quality education data. In this workshop, participants will learn about the security component of quality data, specifically the Family Educational Records and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Health Insurance Portability and Access Act (HIPAA) regulations that govern school confidentiality issues. Participants will also identify practices that compromise security.