FERPA AT A GLANCE: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

One of the most significant changes a family experiences in sending a son or daughter to college is the difference in privacy standards for educational records at the university. The New School has a long history and tradition of protecting student privacy. The New School is also subject to a federal law called the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (also called FERPA or the Buckley Amendment) that sets privacy standards for student education records and requires institutions to publish a compliance statement, including a statement of related institutional policies. The New School policies are online on the registrar’s website. This policy often raises questions from parents, and we have provided the answers to many of these questions here.

What records does FERPA cover?
The privacy protection FERPA gives to students is very broad. With limited exceptions, the FERPA regulations give privacy protection to all students’ “education records.” Education records are defined as “those records that are directly related to a student and are maintained by an educational agency or institution or by a party acting for the agency or institution.” Examples of records entitled to FERPA privacy protection are grade reports, transcripts, and most disciplinary files. FERPA does not cover treatment or medical records, but other policies do.

How can I find out my son or daughters grades?
The best approach is to ask your son or daughter directly. Communicating with young adults can be a challenge. They’re not always as forthcoming as we would like. The college years, however, are a period of remarkable growth and maturation. The ability and willingness of students to share information and insights usually grow, especially as they acquire the confidence that comes with assuming greater responsibility for their own lives.

Is there a single waiver that my son or daughter can sign so that I can have access to all of the records, or are there separate waivers for different offices?
The New School does not have a single waiver that students can sign to give families access to their records. In carrying out their assigned responsibilities, many offices at The New School collect and maintain information about students. Only two offices have records on all students. The Registrar’s Office maintains information pertaining to a student’s enrollment (registration) and official academic record. Student Financial Services maintains information about charges assessed and payments made to a student’s account.

A parent can have access to student billing accounts and financial aid information through MyNewSchool if the student grants the parent access to his or her account as an authorized user.

Students can grant access to their parents and family members to view the following information through the parent portal:

- Student's class schedule
- Enrollment status (including credits earned, and declared major and minor)
- Grade point average (GPA)

Note that students must approve these requests and may revoke these privileges at any time.
Why do I have limited access to my son’s or daughter’s college records, given that I am paying the bills?
Under FERPA, the access rights that parents and legal guardians had in the elementary and secondary school settings are transferred to students once the students have turned eighteen or are attending any post-secondary (college level) educational institution.

A parent can have access to student billing accounts and financial aid information through MyNewSchool if the student grants the parent access to his or her account as an authorized user.

How can I make sure the university-related bills are sent to me?
The university uses online billing statements; the statements are not mailed. Students view their statements through MyNewSchool, the New School’s internal online portal. A parent can also have access to student billing account and financial aid information through MyNewSchool if the student grants the parent access to his or her account as an authorized user.

Where can I find out more information about FERPA?
FERPA is enforced by the U.S. Department of Education. The department maintains a FERPA website, with links to FERPA regulations.

Will I be notified if my son or daughter is placed on academic probation?
No. Information about grades and academic standing is provided directly to students. You can, of course, ask your son or daughter to keep you informed about his or her academic performance.

Will I be notified if my son or daughter is hurt or in danger?
If we learn of an emergency involving one of our students, we will attempt to notify the student’s parents only in accordance with specific departmental emergency notification policy and procedures. Hospitals and police agencies may also follow their own notification protocols. Students are responsible for submitting their emergency contact information in MyNewSchool and with other university departments or programs that request and maintain emergency contact information, such as University Housing or study abroad programs.

What if my son or daughter is in danger off campus?
Generally, students are not subject to the university's control or supervision. However, if we learn of an emergency involving a New School student, we will attempt to notify the student’s parents in accordance with our emergency notification policy and procedures. Hospitals and police agencies will also follow their own notification protocols.

I've heard about a FERPA provision allowing parents to have access to their students’ educational records if the parents claim the students as dependents for federal tax purposes. What position has the university taken regarding this provision?
FERPA regulations authorize—but do not require—disclosure of student records to parents of a student who is claimed as a dependent for federal tax purposes. The New School's student record privacy policy does not take the student’s federal tax dependent status into consideration.
I’ve heard about a FERPA provision allowing notice to parents when a student violates alcohol or drug laws. What position has the university taken on this rule? FERPA regulations authorize—but do not require—disclosure to parents of “the student’s violation of any Federal, State, or local law, or of any rule or policy of the institution, governing the use or possession of alcohol or a controlled substance.” The New School does not routinely disclose drug and alcohol violations to parents. However, because of the health and safety risk inherent in alcohol and other drug misuse, the New School will notify parents/family members of first-year students under the age of 21 if:

- The student has committed a violation accompanied by other serious concerns, such as needing medical attention, significantly damaging property, or at risk for losing their housing privilege as a result of the violation.
- The student has had repeated alcohol or drug violations.

In these cases, staff at Student Conduct and Community Standards will contact the parents/guardians.

Will I be informed if my son or daughter is treated at Student Health Services (SHS)? By law, SHS maintains confidentiality for students 18 and older and emancipated minors. These students must consent to the release of medical information. Parents of minors, however, are entitled to medical information, except for information about contraception, pregnancy testing, sexually transmitted disease, and substance abuse services. SHS clinicians encourage students to talk to parents when appropriate and will contact parents of minors for serious conditions and some procedures. SHS clinicians will also contact parents of students 18 and older for serious conditions, with student permission.

Will I be informed if my son or daughter is seeing a counselor at Counseling Services? State laws and professional ethical codes preclude The New School from sharing student counseling records with third parties, including parents, without the student’s consent. There are important policy reasons supporting these confidentiality requirements, including the proven therapeutic benefits associated with encouraging students to talk openly and candidly with a counselor — without fear that their conversations will be reported to others. Confidentiality, of course, is not absolute. It can be broken (and parents notified, as appropriate) if counselors determine that a student poses an imminent danger to self or to an identifiable third party.

How will I know if my son or daughter is subject to university disciplinary action? The university does not routinely inform parents of student disciplinary action but regularly encourages students to inform their parents about serious infractions (see exceptions below). As the family member of a student at The New School, you may have numerous questions and concerns about the non-academic conflict resolution process. The Student Conduct and Community Standards (SCCS) office administers this process; the office has general information about the Student Code of Conduct on its website. The SCCS staff is always available to discuss
general information about the resolution process, university regulations, and related laws. It is important to know that federal law prohibits SCCS staff from releasing any information about a student’s involvement in the resolution process, even to family members, without the student’s written permission. In addition, please note that at The New School, each school and college has its own policies regarding academic misconduct, and those records are kept in those units.

Exceptions may be made for first-year students under the age of 21 if the students have committed an alcohol or other drug violation accompanied by other serious behavior such as needing medical attention, significant property damage, or driving under the influence, and for first-year students under the age of 21 who have committed a second alcohol or drug violation. In these cases, staff at The New School’s Health Services will contact the parents or family members.