What’s the deal with... FERPA?

The federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) prohibits educational institutions from disclosing information from a student’s educational record to any third party – including parents – without the student’s consent. Since FERPA’s provisions are not absolute, there are limited exceptions. The Higher Education Reauthorization Act of 1998 allows colleges and universities to contact the parents of students when a student’s behavior involves the use of alcohol and/or other drugs, provided that the student is under the age of 21 at the time of notification. Additionally, in certain situations notification is allowed to protect the health or safety of the student or others. The University’s parental notification policy provides for different types of contact depending on the circumstances of the incident.

What does that mean?

The George Washington University views parents as partners in the educational process and chooses to notify the parents of students in accordance with the limited exceptions provided in FERPA:

- **The parents of students who are transported to the hospital for alcohol or drug use are contacted via letter by a member of the Division of Student Affairs.**
- **The parents of students found in violation of an alcohol or drug violation are contacted via letter by a member of the Division of Student Affairs.**
- **The parents of students involved in other alcohol-related incidents may be contacted via letter by a member of the Division of Student Affairs.**

For all other instances where a student is involved in a disciplinary process, the Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities and the Office of Academic Integrity staff must receive a Consent to Release Confidential Information form (FERPA Waiver) prior to the University being able to disclose any information to a third party, including parents, about a student’s disciplinary record.

Students will be required to submit a Consent to Release Confidential Information form for every incident addressed by the Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities and the Office of Academic Integrity.

*The Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities and the Office of Academic Integrity is not able to release information associated with another individual’s disciplinary record, even if they are involved in the same incident.*

How is this communicated to students?

When a student is involved in a disciplinary process, the Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities and the Office of Academic Integrity staff will review the University’s parental notification policies with the student and strongly encourage them to submit a Consent to Release Confidential Information form so members of our staff are able to speak with a third party, including parents, if the office is contacted.

What should I do if I have questions about FERPA?

Individuals who have questions about FERPA related to academic and non-academic disciplinary record information should contact the Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities and the Office of Academic Integrity at (202) 994-6757 or via email at rights@gwu.edu.

Individuals who have questions about FERPA related to academic record information should contact Colonial Central at (202) 994-9000. Consent/waiver forms submitted to Colonial Central do not apply to information maintained in a student’s disciplinary record.