

BUTLER UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCING STUDENT RECORD PRIVACY ISSUES AT BUTLER UNIVERSITY

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) guarantees certain privacy rights for Butler students regarding access to their educational records as well as protections from unauthorized publication, release or examination of these records by others. A full statement of Butler policies and practices may be found in the Student Handbook under “Privacy Rights of Students at Butler University” at www.butler.edu/student-handbook.

We hope that this information sheet will help students, parents and guardians to understand student-record privacy issues in our University setting.

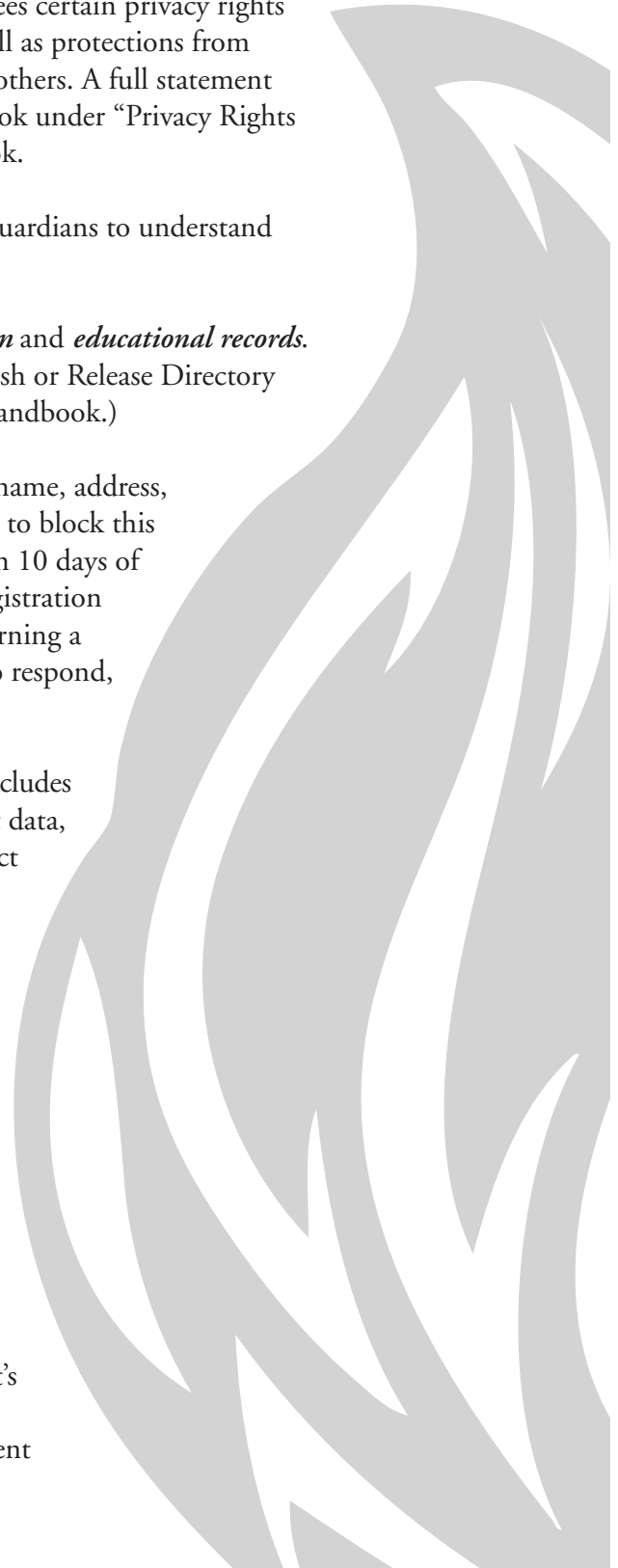
Following FERPA, Butler distinguishes between *directory information* and *educational records*. (For a comprehensive discussion, see “The University’s Right to Publish or Release Directory Information” in the Student Handbook at www.butler.edu/student-handbook.)

Directory information includes certain public information, such as name, address, email address, telephone listing, date of birth, etc. Students who wish to block this information from Butler publications and directories may sign, within 10 days of the first class day of the academic year, a request form available at Registration and Records (Jordan Hall 133). If an inquiry is made of Butler concerning a student who has suppressed directory information, we are expected to respond, “there is no information available for any student by that name.”

Educational records are by definition confidential information; this includes (but is not limited to) application and matriculation data, enrollment data, grades, academic progress reports and advising notes. Student conduct records are also considered educational records.

FERPA protections establish that “third parties”— which include parents and guardians — may not be given access to a student’s educational record unless the student has willingly and knowingly consented in advance to the disclosure of this information. At Butler, we release information from a student’s educational record only after a student has provided a signed and dated release which specifically identifies the person(s) to whom information is to be disclosed. Regardless of age, once students are enrolled in our University, the right to control access to their educational records transfers to them.

With respect to academic issues, these releases are available from and kept on file at the office of the student’s academic advisor, the student’s college, and/or at Registration and Records. With respect to student conduct issues, the release is executed at the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs.



Health Services and Counseling Services also must comply with FERPA and with health privacy laws. Students may sign an independent release that will allow health and counseling staff to share information with parents and guardians. You can find more specific information on each departmental web page or contact the directors of these areas for a consultation at (317) 940-9385.

FERPA does provide certain limited categories of persons and conditions where no signed release by a student is needed for educational information to be shared. Butler clearly identifies those officials and faculty members whose access to a student's educational records or personally identifiable information fits the FERPA criterion of **the institution's "legitimate educational interests."** (See the Student Handbook at www.butler.edu/student-handbook under "Education Records maintained at Butler University" for a list of records, custodial offices and authorized persons.)

FERPA also identifies certain occasions involving student conduct when information may be shared with a parent or guardian without the student's written permission. For instance, we are permitted to do so in a serious health and safety emergency. The Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs also may notify parents or guardians when a student has violated campus rules or other laws governing the use of alcohol or controlled substances.

Partners in a Successful Transition

Butler's privacy policy signals our confidence that students are ready to take on the challenges and responsibilities of adult life, which include not only self-agency and respect for the rights of others, but also a willingness to seek out and use available resources to assist their success.

Parents who have previously been privy to all the details of a son's or a daughter's educational journey may find this new independence *unnerving*—sometimes our students feel the same way!

Butler faculty, administrators and staff will be your partners in this important transition, while respecting FERPA guarantees. Academic advisors with signed releases from their student advisees may be a key point of contact.

Other faculty members and instructors contacted by parents or guardians are expected to refer these inquiries to the student's college office, to the Learning Resource Center (in the case of our Exploratory students), or to the Office of the Registrar.

A college associate dean, faculty advisor or LRC academic advisor may be able to answer many of your questions by discussing Butler academic policies and practices, or by talking through hypothetical scenarios. Staff in the Registrar's office can assist with general questions concerning course registration, academic deadlines and transcript orders. Our campus response may also include explaining the FERPA release option to you and reaching out to individual students as a result of parental inquiries.

If a student signs a FERPA release, the academic advisor, associate dean or appropriate University staff will be able to speak with greater specificity. Following FERPA, we prefer such conversations to take place in person and with the student present, but other arrangements are available if FERPA conditions for authenticating the "third parties" named on a student release can be met.

Of course, if you have urgent concerns about academic or personal matters, don't hesitate to contact us directly. Our care initiatives are outlined on the University's *Community of Care* website (www.butler.edu/community-of-care). By being informed about these resources, parents and guardians can help steer students to the campus offices and staff who can best address their particular issues.

Our best advice to parents and guardians is to give your student the gift of self-determination. Continue to build on the foundation you have already established of mutual support. Let your student be your primary information source; show your interest in the totality of the college experience. If issues arise, remind your son or daughter to seek out University faculty and staff. Problem-solving skills developed by your student across the college years will be of life-long utility.