



FERPA Release of Information Guide for School Nurses

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The [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#) protects the privacy of students' educational records, which, in the school setting, includes health records. Under FERPA, student health records kept by school nurses or other school staff are classified as educational records rather than medical records. This distinction means they are not subject to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), which governs traditional healthcare settings. Instead, FERPA provides parents with specific rights regarding these educational records, such as:

1. **Access** – Parents have the right to view their child's educational records.
2. **Amendments** – Parents can request changes to ensure the accuracy of their child's records.
3. **Disclosure Control** – Parents have some control over who can access their child's personally identifiable information.

Understanding HIPAA Protections: While FERPA applies to school health records, it's helpful to understand HIPAA's role in protecting health information in other settings. HIPAA mandates the confidential handling of protected health information (PHI), ensuring that only those with a legitimate "need to know" can access it. HIPAA also establishes standards for electronic health data, aiming to reduce healthcare fraud and abuse, facilitate health insurance portability, and penalize non-compliance with significant civil and criminal penalties.

FERPA Forms Overview: In managing student health records, two forms facilitate secure information sharing under FERPA:

1. **Consent for Release of Information Form INST 51** – Use this form when an external entity (other than the parent/guardian) requests student health records. Parents can also use this form to authorize the release of records to outside parties and is primarily used for IEP purposes.
2. **Authorization to Release Information Form HLT 805** – Use this form when assisting parents in obtaining documentation from healthcare providers or other entities.

For any questions regarding form selection, please contact the health services coordinator for further assistance. This guide is intended to support school nurses in upholding FERPA requirements while efficiently handling student health information.