



Shhh...Your Right To Privacy



Before age 18, your parent or guardian has the right to see all of your records, including health, education, financial...well, everything! They also have the right to speak to anyone providing services to you, including your doctor, teacher, therapist...well, everybody! When you turn 18, all that changes because as an adult, you have the right to privacy. Let's look at some of the laws that protect your right to privacy and how you can decide who has access to your private information.

Privacy of Health Care Information



HIPAA (which stands for **H**ealth **I**nsurance **P**ortability and **A**ccountability **A**ct) is the federal law that protects your health information. When you go to a new doctor, you will get a HIPAA form to read and sign. You will also get one from your insurance company and other organizations that either provide or pay for health care. HIPAA is a long and complicated law, but what you need to know is that it says your health information must be kept confidential and you must give permission for your information to be shared with anyone. HIPAA does allow your doctor to share information with your insurance company so they can pay for your treatment and with other doctors who may also be treating you. If you have any questions about who may see your information, ask your doctor or the staff at the front desk.

If you think your rights under HIPAA have been violated, you can [file a complaint](#) with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Civil Rights.

Privacy of Education Information

FERPA (which stands for **F**amily **E**ducational **R**ights and **P**rivacy **A**ct) is the federal law that protects your education records. Before age 18, FERPA gave your parent or guardian the right to access your education records, but at age 18, that right transfers to you. There are situations in which a school, even a college, can release your education information to a parent or guardian without your consent:

1. If you are still considered a dependent on their taxes;
2. If there is a health or safety emergency;
3. If you are under 21 and violate any law or policy concerning the use or possession of alcohol or a controlled substance; and
4. School officials may talk to your parents about anything they have personally observed.



If you think your rights under FERPA have been violated, you can complain to your school, the county's Superintendent or school board. You can also [file a complaint](#) with the U.S. Department of Education Family Policy Compliance Office.

Sharing Private Information



Most of us want to allow someone else to see our information at some point in our lives, especially if we want that person to help us make a choice or help us keep our information organized. You have the right to give anyone permission to see and use your information to help you. You give someone that permission by signing a form called a Release of Information or an Authorization Form. You will see these forms quite a bit as you enter the world of adult decisions. Doctors' offices often ask if there is someone you would like to have access to your information. Colleges will also have a form you can sign if you want someone else to receive information about your education.

You can also give someone the right to see and use your private information in a Power of Attorney (POA). A POA gives another person or more than one person the right to have access to your information and make decisions for you. You can have a POA for health care, finances, and education.

You have the right to see your own records at any time. You can ask your doctor or your school for a copy of your records or you can ask to look at them in their office. If you get a copy of your records, you can share them with whomever you choose. When considering whether to share your private information, be sure to think about why you want to share it, how it will or can be used and whether there are any risks of it being used in a way you do not want.

Privacy and the Internet

NOTHING you put on the internet is private! Anyone can share the information you put on the internet and there is really no way to remove the information you put on the internet. Be careful about posting things on social media, such as Facebook. If you would not want everyone you know and even people you don't know to see it, do not post it! Employers often look at social media websites when considering new employees.