

## Confidentiality of Student Records Policy

This policy replaces all previous Confidentiality of Student Records policies.

### INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and other applicable state and federal laws, confidentiality of Aspire student records is a priority. Fiscal agents are responsible for ensuring confidentiality of records. Please communicate this policy to all Aspire- paid and volunteer staff.

### GENERAL

A. FERPA requires that, with certain exceptions, education agencies obtain written consent prior to the disclosure of personally identifiable information (PII) from a student record. However, FERPA allows education agencies to disclose appropriately- designated “directory information” without written consent unless the student has advised the agency to the contrary in accordance with agency procedures. Aspire programs must comply with the procedures set by their fiscal agents regarding notifying students and, if applicable, parents annually of their rights under FERPA.

For additional Information about FERPA visit:

[FERPA Presentation](#)

[Model Notice for Directory Information](#)

B. Appropriate measures must be taken to ensure confidential student records are protected from loss, theft or other compromise. Student records may be transported to and from approved ABLELink data entry sites only, and their confidentiality and safety must be ensured at all times. Student records may not be taken to a public location (e.g. staff member’s home, other non-Aspire work location).

### ELECTRONIC RECORDS

C. All local Aspire programs are responsible for ensuring that ABLELink data entry is completed only by authorized Aspire staff. Authorized staff must complete a [Personal Confidentiality Statement \(PCS\) Form](#), maintain their own login information and keep the information secure. The completed PCS form must be received in the Aspire office by June 30 each year to receive access in the new fiscal year. The individual requesting access to ABLELink on the PCS form may not be the same person who authorizes access. For example, an Aspire director may sign for data entry staff, but the director may not sign for his/her own access. The Aspire director’s supervisor or a higher-level individual in the organization, such as the CFO, CEO, or college president, must approve the director’s access.

All new users in the ABLELink system must first complete the ABLELink Basics training, which includes security and usage requirements.

Users who have not accessed the system for 90 consecutive days will be deactivated and will need to

complete the PCS process again. Reactivation is not automatic and will be dependent on the user's prior access history and job role. Access to ABLELink is limited to the program administrator and no more than one additional person for every 250 students projected to be enrolled. Access granted is at the discretion of the State Aspire Office.

ABLELink access requires an annual password reset process. The required password reset will occur annually following the data snapshot for the previous fiscal year (typically July 31). Users must reset their passwords within 10 days of the data snapshot or the account will be deactivated. State Aspire staff will verify that resets have been performed.

D. Secure (encrypted) transmission methods must be used when transmitting student data electronically. Data containing PII may not be stored in cloud storage such as Google Docs, Dropbox, iCloud, or OneDrive. Individuals responsible for PII, or other institutional data, should designate where sensitive information should be stored. Generally, sensitive information is stored in approved folders on the agency's secured server.

## **RELEASE OF INFORMATION/REVOCAION OF RELEASE**

The Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) requires that all Aspire programs provide the Release of Information Form (RIF) and/or the Revocation of Release of Information Form (R-RIF) to every student during orientation. The required form may be downloaded from [ohiohighered.org/aspire/reference](http://ohiohighered.org/aspire/reference), under the heading **Required Documents**. The release of student information initiates the state data match process in which all Aspire programs are required to participate. Local program and state accountability for employment and HSE completion is determined through the data match process and supplemented by follow-up survey completion.

The Student Registration Form must indicate that the student has signed the RIF, and the signed RIF must be kept on file with the local Aspire program. If the box on the Student Registration Form has not been checked, the student will be excluded from all data match or information sharing between agencies designated on the form. The RIFs are valid until revoked by the student or the minor student's parent/guardian.

The RIF requires the student's signature (and parent/guardian's signature if the student is under 18) in order to authorize ODHE to release his/her educational records, including the student's name; Social Security Number; student ID number; and date of birth, to the agencies listed on the RIF.

Agency use of these records is limited to, and in connection with, the audit and evaluation of federally-supported education programs, or in connection with the enforcement of federal legal requirements, that relate to such programs. FERPA does not require a signature for the postsecondary education data match, but the student should be informed that his/her record will be matched with ODHE data to determine entry into or completion of postsecondary education.

## **USE OF SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS AND DATA MATCH REQUIREMENTS**

Aspire programs must also request the Social Security Number of all students during orientation which should be entered into ABLELink and will be used to facilitate the state data match. If a student does not have a Social Security Number or is unwilling to disclose it, the student is still eligible to enroll in a local Aspire program. The student will, in this case, be excluded from data

matches which require this information, but will not be exempt from follow-up calculations.

Local Aspire programs must continue to complete follow-up surveys to supplement data matches. The survey form may be downloaded from [ohiohighered.org/aspire/reference](http://ohiohighered.org/aspire/reference), under the heading **Surveys**. A list of students surveyed and the survey results must be kept on file in the local program office.

This is a policy established by the Ohio Department of Higher Education's state Aspire office. Questions concerning this policy should be directed to your regional Aspire Program Manager. The Ohio Literacy Resource Center at Kent State University provides support in the use of ABLELink, not interpreting or enforcing policies set by this office.