



Protecting Your Child's Personal Information At School

(NAPSA)—During the school year, parents are asked to sign many forms. In the wrong hands, the personal information on these forms can be used to commit fraud in your child's name—to apply for government benefits, open bank and credit card accounts, apply for a loan or rent a place to live.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the nation's consumer protection agency, cautions that when children are victims of identity theft, the crime may go undetected for years.

There are laws that help safeguard your child's and your family's personal information. For example, the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), enforced by the U.S. Department of Education, protects the privacy of student records. It also gives parents the right to opt out of sharing contact information with third parties, including other families.

If your child is enrolled in school, the FTC suggests that you:

- Find out who has access to your child's personal information, and verify that the records are kept in a secure location.

- Pay attention to materials sent home asking for personal information. Before you reveal information about your child, find out how it will be used, whether it will be shared and with whom.

- Read the notice schools must distribute that explains your rights under the FERPA.

- Ask your child's school about its directory information policy. FERPA requires schools to notify parents and guardians about their school directory policy, and gives you the right to opt out of the release of directory information to third parties.



Verify that your child's records are kept in a secure location.

- Ask for a copy of your school's policy on surveys. The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) gives you the right to see such materials before they are distributed to students.

- Take action if your child's school experiences a data breach. Contact the school to learn more. Talk with teachers, staff or administrators about the incident and their practices. Keep a written record of your conversations. Write a letter to the appropriate administrator, and to the school board, if necessary. The U.S. Department of Education takes complaints about these incidents. Contact the Family Policy Compliance Office, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20202-5920, and keep a copy for your records.

To learn more about FERPA and PPRA, visit www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/index.html. For information about identity theft, visit ftc.gov/idtheft. To file a complaint or get free information on consumer issues, visit ftc.gov or call toll-free, (877) FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357). Watch a video, "How to File a Complaint," at ftc.gov/video to learn more.