Student Privacy and Family Communication

Our commitment to students and families

Mercer County Technical Schools values the partnership and support that families provide to our students. At the postsecondary level, however, students are responsible for managing their own educational experience and communicating directly with the school about their enrollment, attendance, academic progress, schedules, financial matters, student services, conduct, and other program-related concerns.

We encourage family members to remain supportive and to speak with their student directly about any questions or concerns.

FERPA and Post-Secondary Students

Mercer County Technical Schools protects student information in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), a federal law governing the privacy of student education records.

Students attending a postsecondary institution are considered “eligible students” under FERPA. FERPA rights, therefore, belong to the student, including the right to access their education records and the right to control most disclosures of personally identifiable information from those records. 34 C.F.R. §§ 99.3 and 99.7

Accordingly, Mercer County Technical Schools generally cannot confirm or discuss information from an adult student’s education records with a parent, guardian, spouse, employer, or other third party unless the student has provided valid written consent or disclosure is otherwise permitted by FERPA.

Information covered by this includes:

Protected information may include, but is not limited to:

- Whether a student is enrolled or attending
- Class schedules, attendance, grades, progress, credentials, and completion status
- Financial aid, tuition, billing, payment, or account information
- Conduct, disciplinary, health, disability, accommodation, counseling, or support-service information
- Communications between the student and school personnel

This policy applies even when a family member pays tuition, provides financial support, is listed as an emergency contact, or previously communicated with the school while the student was in high school.

Authorizing communication with a parent or third party

An adult student may authorize Mercer County Technical Schools to communicate with a parent, guardian, or other designated individual by submitting a signed and dated FERPA Authorization for Release of Information form.

The authorization must identify:

- The person or persons authorized to receive information
- The specific records or categories of information that may be disclosed
- The purpose of the disclosure
- The date or event upon which the authorization expires

FERPA permits electronic consent when the school can identify and authenticate the student and document the student's approval. 34 C.F.R. § 99.30.

Submission of an authorization does not require Mercer County Technical Schools to disclose information; rather, it permits school staff to communicate within the scope of the student's written authorization and applicable law.