

Providence College Parental Notification Guidelines for the Dean of Students Office

Providence College works closely with students to support their academic and social success, which, in certain situations, may involve having conversations with parents/guardians. Generally, the College considers our students to be capable of and responsible for managing their education and making informed decisions, often with guidance from faculty, staff, and parents.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), of 1974, as amended, is a federal law that protects the privacy of personally identifiable information in student educational records. With limited exceptions, private information from student records cannot be disclosed without student consent. Exceptions to this non-disclosure provision exist for health and safety emergencies. For example, the College has discretion to contact parents/guardians if, based on a reasonable assessment of the known and available facts, a student: has sustained a serious injury; is involved in a serious crime; cannot be located for a period of time; is experiencing a significant mental health crisis; or, is behaving in a manner that poses a serious risk to a member of the community or is otherwise disruptive.

Based on the above criteria, a staff member in the Dean of Students' Office may determine that communication with a parent/guardian is necessary. Additionally, among the factors the Dean's Office will consider when determining whether or not to communicate with a parent/guardian is the extent to which the parent/guardian's involvement is in the student's best interest and not likely to further exacerbate the student's level of distress. When possible and consistent with available professional advice, this communication will be initiated jointly with the student, and the student will participate in the discussion. From the College's perspective, the purposes of the communication include addressing health and/or safety concerns, empowering the student to seek and accept available assistance, promoting the student's continued access to educational programming, and identifying appropriate next steps.