National Forum on Education Statistics

Mission:
To plan, recommend, and develop education data resources that support local, state, and national efforts to improve public and private education throughout the United States.

Members:
• Representatives of state and local education agencies (SEAs and LEAs)
• Representatives of offices of the U.S. Department of Education and other federal agencies
• Associate members from U.S. territories, Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs), and national education associations
The Forum convened the Staff Records Working Group to help education agencies

- effectively collect, manage, utilize, and dispose of staff data;
- protect the privacy of staff data; and
- ensure that requests for staff data and data releases are managed appropriately.
Audience:

- Staff in education agencies who are responsible for employee data
- Other stakeholders, including:
  - Researchers
  - Staff members who approve research proposals
  - Vendors who work with staff data
  - Staff members who have an interest in how their data are managed
Contents

• **Chapter 1**: Overview of Staff Records
• **Chapter 2**: Staff Records Collection and Management
• **Chapter 3**: Access to and Release of Staff Records
• **Chapter 4**: Case Studies
• **Appendices**: Relevant Federal Laws and Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) Examples
Chapter 1 answers these questions:

- What constitutes a staff record?
- What types of data are included in a staff record?
- Why are these types of data collected?
- What are the different levels of reporting and collection of staff records?
- What is the difference between official records and secondary records?
What Is a Staff Record?

- A compilation of records, files, documents, and other materials containing information directly related to an employee of a school, LEA, or SEA.

- Regarding staff records, the term staff includes:
  - Professional and support staff
  - Licensed/certified and non-licensed/certified personnel
  - Permanent, temporary, and contracted employees
  - Salaried and non-salaried workers (volunteers)

- Unlike student records, many parts of staff records are considered public records; staff often find working with staff records to involve fewer restrictions than working with student records.
Types of Staff Records

- **Staff financial data**: includes payroll and benefit information, supplemental pay or stipends, meal credits, reimbursement, and wage garnishment information.

- **Human resources data**: includes, among other data, licensure and certification, professional learning and performance information, demographic data, education records, identity, and medical information.

Some data elements are associated with both types (for example, a teacher’s Social Security number).

Staff records management is closely related to data governance, as detailed in the *Forum Guide to Data Governance*. 
Levels of Data

- Schools, LEAs, and SEAs have different needs related to staff data; therefore, each level collects, reports, and maintains a different range and volume of data.
- Staff data pertaining to operations at the building level (such as vaccinations, drug tests, and direct deposit information) are reported at the LEA level. At the SEA level, data that are not relevant are not reported.
- Because staff records may be held and used in multiple systems, some agencies will designate one of these copies as the official record that must be conserved and honored, and the others as secondary records that may be deleted when they are no longer needed.
Chapter 2 answers these questions:

• How do staff and student records relate to each other? How is this relationship managed?
• What best practices are in place regarding disposal and retention of staff records?
• How do different systems and agencies work together to enable secure cross-agency data transfer?
• How do agencies maintain data quality in their data collection and management practices?
Data Retention and Disposal

- Data disposal policies should be established before any data are collected or provided by an agency. These policies should establish how long data will be maintained in the staff records system, how often data will be updated, and how/when data are to be destroyed. State laws usually specify schedules for document retention.

- When agencies work with external vendors to manage staff records, these vendors may change. It is best practice for agency–vendor agreements to include language specifying what happens to those records when/if the working relationship is terminated (such as a memorandum of understanding).
Data Standards and Quality

- Data standards are key to allowing the successful transfer of data across systems and agencies.
- States may establish their own standards for coordinating and tracking data on individuals across different systems. Without a shared standard, agencies may encounter challenges in data transfer.
- Data quality is also easier to ensure and maintain with shared data standards; for an example, see the Common Education Data Standards (CEDS).
Best Practices for Staff Data Collection and Management

• **Collect only the data that are necessary:** Data collection takes time and money, so prioritize data with a demonstrated need.

• **Consider ways to minimize data stored by the agency:** Collecting the minimum of necessary data facilitates collection and protects staff privacy.

• **Review staff data collections at regular intervals for relevance and utility:** Examine all data that may be obsolete, and only dispose of data not needed by any office or program.

• **Train staff who work with staff data in appropriate data collection and management practices:** Familiarity with student data practices does not always carry over to staff data.
Chapter 3: Access to and Release of Staff Records

Chapter 3 answers these questions:

• What are some best practices for providing internal access and use of staff records?
• How do public records laws and acts impact external access to staff data?
• What are some best practices for providing staff data to requesters outside an agency?
• How should an agency evaluate external requests for staff records?
Best Practices for Internal Access and Use

• Encourage staff members to verify their information. Many agencies offer data portals to allow staff to access and verify their records.

• Establish processes for making additions and changes to staff records. Clear processes ensure data accuracy and clear understanding of the communication and documentation of changes to records.

• Determine who has a legitimate professional interest before granting access to staff records.

• Teach and encourage staff members to value data privacy and security.

• Develop and require Acceptable Use Policies (AUPs).
Best Practices for Managing the Release of Staff Data Outside an Agency

- **Designate a records official:** Most states mandate a single person or office in charge of records under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) or other open records laws.

- **Direct all external requests to the records official:** Tell requesters how to contact the designated official, and require other staff members who receive requests to redirect them.

- **Create standard request forms, and document all requests and releases:** A standard request form and thorough documentation of all requests (approved and denied) will improve the request, evaluation, and policy review processes.

- **Securely transmit any nonpublic data approved for release:** All nonpublic data must be encrypted, protected, or otherwise kept safe and secure.
Chapter 4: Case Studies

Illinois State Board of Education:  
Collecting and Leveraging High-Quality Data

Connecticut State Department of Education:  
Integrating Systems

Ohio Department of Education:  
Protecting Sensitive Information With Regular Review of Access Rights
Chapter 4: Case Studies (continued)

Pawtucket School Department (Rhode Island):
*Going Digital*

Putnam County Schools (West Virginia):
*Secure Data Access Across Multiple Systems*

North Shore School District (Washington):
*Remotely Onboarding Staff During a Pandemic*
Staff Records Working Group

Chair
Dawn Gessel, Putnam County Schools (WV)

Members
Shuwan Chiu, Illinois State Board of Education
DeDe Conner, Kentucky Department of Education
Larry Fruth II, Access 4 Learning
Marilyn King, Bozeman School District #7 (MT)
John Lindner, South Washington County Schools (MN)
Raymond Martin, Connecticut State Department of Education

Zenaida Napa Natividad, Guam Department of Education
Lee Rabbitt, Pawtucket School Department (RI)
Annette Severson, Colorado Department of Education
Cheryl L. VanNoy, Saint Louis Public Schools (MO)
Forum Resources

- For more information about the Forum, please visit https://nces.ed.gov/forum/index.asp
- Download free Forum resources at http://nces.ed.gov/forum/publications.asp

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