



## Note Recording: Best Practices

### Data Privacy Regulations to Remember:

#### *1974 Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)*

- Education records are those records that are “personally identifiable information” and are: - (a) directly related to a student and - (b) maintained by an educational institution or a person acting for such agency or institution (20 USC 1232g(a)(4)(A))

#### *1996 Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA)*

- Protected health information/records

#### *2005 Minnesota Government Data Practices Act § 13.055*

- Defines “unauthorized acquisition of data”
- Data that are not public must only be accessible to persons whose work assignment reasonably requires access to the data. Minn. Stat. § 13.05, subd. 5
- Echoes FERPA in protecting educational data. Minn. Stat. § 13.32

### Definition and Purpose of Notes:

Notes documenting advising services are a core element in providing excellent service to students. These notes should be descriptive but concise in nature, serving several purposes including:

- Creating a record of student’s advising contacts and advice provided; creating institutional memory.
- Giving advisors context and history that allows them to focus on key issues for students rather than repeating or revisiting the same information each visit.
- Communicating critical information to other University personnel.
- Personalizing the advising experience.
- Providing the reader the main subject of the meeting, the goals/outcomes, and any agreed-upon follow-up activities.

### Guidelines and Considerations in Creating and Managing Notes:

- Assume that what you write may be viewed by students, their parents, or the general public.
- Focus on facts and events. Use descriptive comments to summarize conversations and interactions.
- Consult with Data Privacy Officer or supervisors when there is a question about what information to include in a contact note or summary.
- Keep current on updating student notes - letting time pass can mean a loss of important details.

- Narrative notes are helpful and readable, but concise, bulleted statements/summaries are also very effective, and often make it easier to scan the notes in preparing for an appointment.
- Remember to insert a 'subject' in the template. This makes it easier to sort or search through notes as files grow for a student.
- The content of advising or other student notes will be different, but the concerns and the standards for privacy, sharing and confidentiality are the same. Stay current on, and abide by FERPA.
- Notes must never be shared with others if their role does not allow them access to the notes.

## **Content and Information to Include in Notes: How Much is Too Much?**

Adapted from University of Notre Dame

### **Scenario 1: Student discloses learning disability**

**Situation:** A student informs you that she is not doing well in course work despite the fact that she is using every tutoring/learning assistance resource available. After you learn that she is indeed trying and that she seems to lose concentration very quickly, you decide to refer her to Accessibility Resources.

**What is too much:** Jane came in to discuss her lack of success in her course work this term. After an extensive conversation of how she is approaching her schoolwork, I decided to refer her to Accessibility Resources for consultation because I really think she might have attention deficit disorder.

**What is just right:** Jane came in to discuss her lack of success in her course work this term. After an extensive conversation of how she is approaching her schoolwork, I referred her to Accessibility Resources.

### **Scenario 2: Illness (mental or physical) disclosed by student**

**Situation:** A student disclosed an illness (mental or physical) that is affecting schoolwork

**What is too much:** Met with Joe to reduce his course load because he indicated that he is suffering from bi-polar disorder and cannot handle three courses this semester. Joe stated that he is working with a psychologist and is currently taking medication. Joe will consult with me for future term scheduling.

**What is just right:** Met with Joe to reduce his course load because he provided documentation of a medical situation. Joe will consult with me for future term scheduling

### **Scenario 3: Death in family / family emergency**

**Situation:** A student discloses that her/his grandfather passed away and will require excused absences to attend the funeral.

**What is too much:** John's grandfather died this weekend after a long battle with Alzheimer's Disease. John will miss class this coming week to attend the funeral in California. I extended

my condolences and contacted Student Affairs so that they might send out officially excused absences to his professors. I asked if he wanted me to refer him to the Counseling Center for grief counseling after his return. He will let me know.

**What is just right:** *John's grandfather passed away this weekend.* John will miss class this coming week to attend the funeral in California. I contacted Student Affairs so that they might send out officially excused absences to his professors. I discussed support services should he wish to make use of them.

#### **Scenario 4: Family situation**

**Situation:** A student is requesting to drop a course after the drop deadline, and tells you via e-mail that her personal circumstances for the semester in question are related to having a protection order against her abusive father. Her mom then e-mailed you and told you more about the situation, which included the student filing a civil suit against him.

**What is too much:** Jane e-mailed me stating that her father hits her and is verbally abusive which is causing her to miss a lot of school. Her mother e-mailed me with more information and added that they are in the process of filing a civil suit against the father.

**What is just right:** Because of complications arising from a personal issue, Jane discussed submitting a late withdrawal request to the Registrar's Office for her MATH10350 class.

#### **Scenario 5: Challenging student**

**Situation:** You met with a student related to a schedule adjustment. She was extremely rude and not flexible with scheduling. The scheduling process was very hard.

**What is too much:** Met with Jane related to her request to adjust her schedule. Jane demanded to have all of her courses after 12:30pm and would not take a math course despite our suggestions. Jane was extremely rude.

**What is just right:** Met with Jane related to her request to adjust her schedule. She shared specific schedule expectations and I explained the potential impacts of her preferences. We worked out her schedule; however, she elected not to take a math course against my guidance.

#### **Scenario 6: Attendance issues**

**Situation:** A student has missed their last 2 weeks of classes and discloses to you that they have a sleep disorder.

**What is too much:** Met with John related to class attendance. He has missed 2 weeks of classes and he told me it's because he has a sleep disorder. I suggested he talk to Accessibility Resources or a counselor at Counseling Center about his sleep issue, and recommended he communicate with his professors.

**What is just right:** Met with John related to class attendance. He has missed 2 weeks of classes. I suggested John contact Accessibility Resources or Counseling Center for assistance and recommended he communicate with his professors.

### **Scenario 7: Advisor suspects depression**

**Situation:** An advisor suspects a depressed student could be suicidal, but the student has not said anything.

**What is too much:** Reviewed remaining degree requirements and talked about Jane's graduation plans. Jane does not seem excited about graduating and seems really depressed. I worry that she is considering suicide but has not said anything to make me think this. I am worried. I referred Jane to the Counseling Center and also encouraged her to schedule the appointment in my office.

**What is just right:** Reviewed remaining degree requirements and talked about plans after graduation. Jane does not have job leads so I referred her to our Career Development Center. At the end of our meeting, I asked her how things are going. Based on our conversation, I submitted a MavCARES alert.

### **Scenario 8: Student discloses that they are suicidal**

**Situation:** A student verbally says to you during an advising appointment, "I'm going to commit suicide before the semester is over."

**What is too much:** Met with student to talk about next semester's classes. Recommended he gets started on his foreign language requirements. At the end of our meeting, when I asked him how things are going, John said "I'm going to commit suicide before the semester is over". I immediately walked John to the Counseling Center.

**What is just right:** Met with student to talk about next semester's classes. Recommended he get started on his foreign language requirements. At the end of our meeting, when I asked him how things are going, John disclosed a personal situation. I contacted XXXX for assistance and provided the following resources, XXXX, to the student.

*For additional questions or further support, contact us at [mavconnect@mnsu.edu](mailto:mavconnect@mnsu.edu)*