



**Privacy Impact Assessment  
for the**

**Secretary's Communications Control System**

Date

April 21, 2008

Contact Point

System Owner: Executive Secretariat  
Office of the Secretary

U.S. Department of Education

**1. What information will be collected for the system (Ex. Name, Social Security Number, annual income, etc)?**

The Office of the Secretary utilizes the Secretary's Communications Control System to track communications from and responses to individuals who have contacted the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Senior Officers or other officials of the Department for whom the Department controls responses. The information received is that which the sender chooses to include in the communication. Only the sender's name and address and/or email address, and a short summary of the communication, are logged into the Communications Control System. If the communication is a paper letter, it is scanned and is placed in the record, usually as a non-searchable TIF file.

**2. Why is this information being collected?**

This information is collected when individuals communicate with the Office of the Secretary, the Deputy Secretary, Senior Officers or other officials of the Department for whom the Department controls responses. The information is provided voluntarily by the communicant, and is collected and maintained in the system so that correspondence to the Department can be assigned internally for response, and tracked to ensure that an appropriate response is generated in a timely manner.

**3. How will the information be used?**

The information is used to track, manage, and account for the correspondence received by the Department, including individual concerns and complaints regarding programs administered by the Department. Additionally, reports of pending letters and reports on average response times are generated internally using this data so that the Office of the Secretary can ensure that responses are handled in a timely manner.

**4. Will this information be shared with any other agency or entity? If so, with whom?**

Generally, this information will not be disclosed to any other entity. However, the Department of Education may disclose information contained in a record in this system of records under the applicable routine uses without the consent of the individual if the disclosure is compatible with the purposes for which the record was collected, i.e., tracking Department correspondence.

Possible disclosures include:

- Disclosure to Congress, Other Agencies, or the Public
- Disclosure to Recipients of Federal Financial Assistance, Witnesses, or Consultants
- Disclosure for Use by Other Law Enforcement Agencies
- Enforcement Disclosure
- Litigation and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Disclosures
- Freedom of Information Act Advice Disclosure
- Research Disclosure
- Congressional Member Disclosure

These disclosures may be made on a case-by-case basis or, if the Department has complied with the computer matching requirements of the Privacy Act, under a computer matching agreement.

Additionally, the Department may disclose to a consumer reporting agency information regarding a claim by the Department which is determined to be valid and overdue as follows: (1) The name, address, taxpayer identification number and other information necessary to establish the identity of the individual responsible for the claim; (2) The amount, status and history of the claim; and (3) The program under which the claim arose.

**5. Describe the notice or opportunities for consent that are provided to individuals about what information is collected and how that information is shared with other organizations. (e.g., posted Privacy Notice).**

On the "Contacts" Web page at [www.ED.gov](http://www.ED.gov), users can link to the Department's Privacy Policy. This is a general policy, which applies to the handling of any information maintained in the Secretary's Communications Control System. The policy highlights the voluntary nature of information collected.

**Privacy Policy Summary**

Thank you for visiting the U.S. Department of Education (ED) website and reviewing our privacy policy. Our policy is simple: We collect no personal information about you unless you choose to provide that information to us. We do not give, share, sell, or transfer any personal information to a third party.

Some of our web pages (such as online publication order forms, conference and training registration forms, web discussion forums) let you voluntarily submit personal information. In those cases, we will provide a specific notice before you begin submitting any personal information, explaining how your information will be safeguarded.

If you want to know more about how we record non-personal information about your visit or how we use information that you voluntarily submit, read on.

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**2. Non-personal Information We Record**

If you do nothing during your visit but browse through the website, read pages, or download information, our website's operating system will automatically record some general information about your visit.

During your visit, our web operating system will record:

1. The **Internet domain** for your Internet service, such as "xcompany.com" or "xcompany.net" if you use a private Internet access account, or "yourschool.edu" if you connect from a college or university domain.
2. The **type of browser** (such as "Netscape version X" or "Internet Explorer version X") that you are using.
3. The **type of operating system** that you use (such as Macintosh, Unix, or Windows).
4. The **date and time** you visit our site, and the **web pages that you visit** on our site.

5. The **address of the previous website** you were visiting, if you linked to us from another website.

We use this information for statistical analysis, to help us make our site more useful to visitors. This tracking system does not record information about individuals.

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### 3. Cookies

On certain ED web pages, we use "cookies" to help you use our websites interactively. A cookie is a small file that a website transfers to your computer's hard disk, usually to keep track of you while you are connected to that site.

The cookies on ED web pages do not collect information about you, but only about your browser "session." The cookie makes it easier for you to use the dynamic features of these web pages, without having to provide the same information again as you move from one page to another.

To protect your privacy, be sure to close your browser completely after you have finished conducting business with a website that uses cookies. If you are concerned about the potential use of information gathered from your computer by cookies, you can set your browser to prompt you before it accepts a cookie. Most Internet browsers have settings that let you identify and/or reject cookies.

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### 4. Information from E-mail You Send to Us

If you decide to send us an electronic mail message (e-mail), the message will usually contain your return e-mail address. If you include personally-identifying information in your e-mail because you want us to address issues specific to your situation, we may use that information in responding to your request. In other limited circumstances, including requests from Congress or limited other parties, we may be required by law to disclose information that you submit.

Also, e-mail is not necessarily secure against interception. Please send only information necessary to help us process your request.

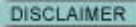
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### 5. Information Collected from Interactive Forms

On some of our web pages we offer interactive forms that let you voluntarily submit personal information (such as your e-mail address, name, or organization). This occurs when you are registering for various conferences, workshops, or training sessions offered by ED, taking student aid counseling quizzes, ordering publications from ED Pubs, or submitting comments to various web discussion forums. In those cases, all submitted information is used only for the expressed purposes for which it is intended and is not made available to any third party. However, when you submit a comment to an ED web discussion forum, if you supply your name, e-mail address, or other personal information, that information is posted along with your comment.

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## 6. Links to Other Sites

Our policy discloses the privacy practices for the ED website. But ED provides links to other websites. When you leave the ED website (www.ed.gov), you will be going to sites that are beyond our control. We try to ensure that links that leave our site are clearly labeled, usually with a  icon. These other sites may send their own cookies to users, collect data, or solicit personal information. The privacy policies and procedures described here for ED do not apply to any external links. We encourage you to read the privacy policies of any site you link to from ours, especially if you share any personal information. Be informed. You are the person best qualified to protect your own privacy.

### 6. How will the information be secured?

The information is secured following the guidance of OMB Circular A-130, "Management of Federal Information Resources," Appendix III, "Security of Federal Automated Information Resources," and Public Law 100-235, "Computer Security Act of 1987." The Secretary's Communications Control System resides in the Department network and is in compliance with Department Risk Assessment policy and procedures. The System Security Plan details the security requirements and describes the security controls that are in place to meet those requirements.

Sensitive data, such as that covered by the Privacy Act, needs to be protected from unauthorized disclosure, modification, and destruction. The following guidelines and procedures have been implemented for protecting System sensitive data and resources.

- All physical access to the Department of Education sites are controlled and monitored by security personnel who check each individual entering the building for his or her employee or visitor badge.
- During working hours, direct access to the file cabinets is limited to authorized staff.
- During non-working hours, the rooms in which the file cabinets are located are locked and only those individuals with access to those rooms can access the hard copies of records.
- The computer systems employed by the Department of Education offer a high degree of resistance to tampering and circumvention

### 7. Is a system of records being created or updated with the collection of this information?

The authority for the Department to maintain these records is an existing system of records entitled Secretary's Communications Control System - 18-01-01.