

SECTION 2513: ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION WITH SOONERSTART FAMILIES

Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), SoonerStart employees are legally and ethically obliged to safeguard the confidentiality of child and family information. This presents unique challenges when communicating with families using email and/or texting. There is the potential for others to inadvertently view the information on the family's mobile phone or computer once the information has been transmitted; or the information stored on the transmitting phone or computer may be subject to disclosure through the Oklahoma Open Records Act.

However, email correspondence is efficient, economical, and provides the family with timely information. Texting allows for immediate notifications and responses and is especially useful when scheduling appointments with families. Because emailing and/or texting has become a preferred method of communication between early intervention staff and parents, SoonerStart has procedures in place to protect both the SoonerStart program and the family.

The **Authorization for Electronic Communication (Appendix JJ)** must be completed and signed by both the parent/caregiver and SoonerStart staff if the family desires to receive information about their child's SoonerStart services electronically.

The parent/caregiver has the right to terminate their authorization at any time. This request must be in writing, signed and dated. It cannot be retroactive to cover information released by any prior authorization.

SoonerStart staff may only use their institutional email account (sde.ok.gov or health.ok.gov) for electronic correspondence with the family. Text messages to the family may only be sent and received on an official OSDE or OSDH cellular phone. Personal email accounts or personal cellular phones should never be used when communicating with SoonerStart families.