

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Expanding Opportunity and Unleashing Potential

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL

November 14, 2024

Via Electronic Mail

Office of the Attorney General
Attn: Security Breach Notification
200 Street Paul Place
Baltimore, Maryland 21202
Idtheft@oag.state.md.us

Re: Inadvertent Disclosure of Student Personally
Identifiable Information

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), this letter is submitted as notification of a breach of the security of a system, to the Office of the Attorney General, in accordance with the requirements set forth under Md. State Government Code Ann. § 10-1305.

On Thursday, October 17, 2024, an email was sent by an MCPS program coordinator to 22 parents of newly enrolled students in the MCPS Saturday School Program, mistakenly containing a spreadsheet with student enrollment data of approximately 824 current Saturday School students, rather than the intended program flier. The disclosed information included student names, birth dates, contact information (addresses, emails, and phone numbers), student IDs, and race (if provided). The information contained in the spreadsheet is compiled for educational purposes only, including for communication with families and data reporting. Upon realizing the error, the coordinator promptly contacted the 22 recipients, apologized for the mistake, and requested that they delete the email and refrain from forwarding or saving the attachment. The coordinator also informed the direct supervisor, and the appropriate offices were subsequently contacted and consulted, including technology, communications, office of the general counsel, and office of the chief academic officer.

Please note, that no financial information or social security numbers were included in the information collected on the spreadsheet. However, MCPS recognizes that while this information, with the exception of the student ID and race, are largely directory information under the Federal Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the disclosure of this information constitutes a breach that under the circumstances, requires notification to all the impacted families, which we intend to provide within the next business day. As a result of the information gathered to date, there is no law enforcement involvement at this time.

MCPS is committed to protecting student privacy, and has taken immediate actions to address the breach as follows:

1. The MCPS program coordinator promptly contacted the 22 families, requesting they permanently delete the email and the spreadsheet. MCPS is in the process of following up with those families to confirm that the email and attachment have been deleted.
2. With this letter to the Office of the Attorney General, and the required notification to the Department of Information Technology, MCPS has reported the breach to state authorities as required by law.
3. While MCPS does not suspect or have reason to believe the action of the coordinator was anything other than a mistake, MCPS has begun a thorough internal investigation into the matter.

MCPS is also in the process of taking the following measures:

1. MCPS will conduct a detailed, internal review of the data management practices within the Saturday School program, and provide additional training to Saturday School staff.
2. MCPS will be sending a letter to all impacted families:
 - a. Notifying them of the breach and expressing regret for the mistake;
 - b. Providing the appropriate MCPS unit contact information for families to call or email with questions, or to request support; and
 - c. Providing the toll-free telephone numbers and addresses for the major consumer reporting agencies.
3. Providing the toll-free telephone numbers, addresses, and web site addresses for the Federal Trade Commission and the Office of the Attorney General – with a statement that an individual can obtain information from these sources about steps the individual can take to avoid identity theft.
4. Providing families with the action steps MCPS will be taking in the immediate and near future, to protect against the likelihood of similar future breaches as well as reduce the risk of other types of data security breaches.

We will keep you informed if there are any significant developments or updates to the MCPS internal investigation. If you should require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Sincerely,



Stephanie P. Williams
General Counsel

SPW:LTP:ta

Copy to:

Dr. Thomas Taylor
Mrs. Stephanie S. Sheron
Dr. Peggy Pugh