

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Media Releases

In order for school staff, CPS volunteers, chaperones, student teachers, interns and/or CPS contracted vendors to be able to record, film, photograph, audiotape or videotape a student's image, likeness, spoken words, student work, performance and movement in any form, a student **MUST** have a signed media release on file. Verbal permission from a parent/guardian/caregiver is not acceptable.

What is the purpose of the media release?

The media Release has two purposes:

A. The purpose of the media release is to permit CPS staff to record, film, photograph, audiotape or videotape a student's image, likeness, spoken words, student work or learning experiences, performance and movement, in any form, and to publish this information along with the student's name, scholarship, awards, honors and/or post-high school plans in order to highlight and share the activities and achievements of CPS students with local media, whether print, electronic, digital or other forms of media and in school district and/or school-based publications, whether print, electronic, digital or other forms of media, including the CPS website and social media, any website that has been approved for use by the CPS Information, Communication and Technology Services (ICTS) department, for broadcasting on television, including Cambridge Educational Access (CEA-TV), and/or displaying, publishing, distributing or exhibiting such information at community or school-based events (such as a school's open house or a public exhibition of student work or awards or as part of classroom instruction).

B. To permit CPS staff to record, film, photograph, audiotape and/or videotape students within the classroom as part of a particular learning experience for the purposes of utilizing the recording, film, photograph, audiotape and/or videotape with students, teachers and/or administrators within the school district for educational purposes. Staff members who plan learning experiences that include the recording, filming, photographing, audiotaping and/or videotaping of students must obtain, in advance, approval from their principal/head of upper school. Only CPS-owned equipment may be used for such purposes. Personal equipment may not be used with the exception of either (i) personal equipment used in conjunction with a CPS-owned digital media card for storage of any recordings, film, photographs, audiotape or videotape, or (ii) personal equipment that has installed the CPS-sanctioned SchoolCam software that is designed to store any recordings, film, photographs, audiotape or videotape directly and only to CPS' GoogleDrive. In these latter two instances, staff also need to have a signed CPS Student Data Breach Agreement on file with the school district's Information, Communications and Technology Services Office. The media release does not apply to videotaping by security cameras that are located in schools and on school buses. No consent is necessary for videotaping in this particular circumstance.

What is the school district’s process for obtaining media releases for students?

At the start of each school year media releases are distributed to the parents/guardians/caregivers of all Cambridge Public School students as part of the annual forms that are distributed to parents/guardians/caregivers. Parents/guardians/caregivers are asked to Opt In via General Media Release, which covers both A and B, above: or to Opt In via a Release of Student Data for Educational Purposes Only, which permits only the uses described in section B, above. Parents/guardians/caregivers may also choose to leave the form blank, thereby granting none of the permissions outlined above. If parents/guardians/caregivers sign both options, the student is considered to have a signed General Media Release. Parents/guardians/caregivers review the media release and return the signed or unsigned form to their child’s school.

Is it acceptable for school staff to just get verbal permission from a parent/guardian/caregiver to record, film, photograph, audiotape or videotape a student?

No. Verbal permission is not allowed. A current media release signed by the student’s parent/guardian/caregiver must be on file with the school before any student is recorded, filmed, photographed, audiotaped or videotaped.

How does a school staff member know if a student has a signed media release form on file?

A school staff member who has a legitimate educational interest can [log in to Aspen](#) to view this information. After locating the student in Aspen, select Forms from the drop-down menu to see this information. School staff can also contact the school clerk.

What happens if there are no signed media releases on file for all students who could potentially be recorded, filmed, photographed, audiotaped or videotaped?

Only students who have a current signed media release on file can be recorded, filmed, photographed, audiotaped or videotaped. However, no student can be excluded from participating in a school activity or learning experience due to the fact that they do not have a current signed media release on file. School staff are responsible for ensuring that all students are able to participate in any school activity or learning experience and that only those students who have current signed media releases on file are recorded, filmed, photographed, audiotaped or videotaped.

Can school staff record, film, photograph, audiotape or videotape a student who does not have a signed media release on file and subsequently just crop or edit the student out of the finalized work?

No. A current media release signed by the student’s parent/guardian/caregiver must be on file with the school before any student is recorded, filmed, photographed, audiotaped

or videotaped by CPS staff and/or by CPS volunteers, chaperones, student teachers, interns or CPS contracted vendors. In other words, in order for school staff, CPS volunteers, chaperones, student teachers, interns and/or CPS contracted vendors to be able to record, film, photograph, audiotape or videotape a student's image, likeness, spoken words, student work, performance and movement in any form, a student MUST have a signed media release on file.

If due to inadvertence or mistake, a student who does not have a signed media release on file is recorded, filmed, photographed, audiotaped or videotaped, then the recording, film, photograph, audiotape or videotape of the student must be destroyed in accordance with federal and state student record requirements unless the parent/guardian/caregiver gives specific written authorized consent for use of that particular recording, film, photograph, audiotape or videotape of the student to be used for a specific purpose.

What steps do school staff need to take if a student does not have a current signed media release on file and a specific or special event is being planned?

If the specific or special event has been approved by the school principal/head of upper school, then they will work with the Office of Legal Counsel regarding the creation of a customized media release form for the specific event. The school will then distribute that form to parents/guardians/caregivers of students that do not already have signed media releases on file to sign prior to the event. Only students who have signed media releases on file (either the school district's annual media release or a specific event media release) will be able to be recorded, filmed, photographed, audiotaped or videotaped. However, no student can be excluded from participating in a specific or special event due to the fact that they do not have a current signed media release on file. School staff are responsible for ensuring that all students are able to participate in any specific or special school event and that only those students who have current signed media releases on file are recorded, filmed, photographed, audiotaped or videotaped.

How long should signed media releases be maintained?

Signed media releases must be maintained for either seven (7) year after the last date of the school year in which the media release was executed or seven (7) years after the student transfers, graduates or withdraws from the school district, whichever is later.

Are original recordings, film, photographs, audiotape or videotape ever released?

No.

How long are recordings, film, photographs, audiotape or videotapes maintained before erased or destroyed?

It depends on the content and nature of the recordings, film, photographs, audiotape or videotapes. The school principal/head of upper school should be consulted before any recordings, film, photographs, audiotape or videotapes are destroyed.

Does the media release cover the use of recordings, film, photographs, audiotape or videotape by external organizations or sources for purposes other than the school district highlighting and sharing the activities and achievements of CPS students (such as inclusion in professional development materials, submission in connection with an application for an educator award or grant)?

No. If a member of school staff is contemplating the use of recordings, film, photographs, audiotape or videotape by external organizations or sources for their own purposes (in other words, purposes other than the school district highlighting and sharing the activities and achievements of CPS students), then they will need to obtain approval from his/her school principal/head of upper school. The school principal/head of upper school will then obtain approval from the Superintendent or designee and the school principal/head of upper school also will work with the Office of Legal Counsel regarding the creation of a customized media release form. The school will then distribute that customized form to parents/guardians/caregivers to sign.

What if an external organization wants to record, film, photographs, audiotape or videotape during the school day (such as a film or television show or a school of higher education)?

The external organization must first obtain permission from the Superintendent of Schools or designee and the school principal/head of upper school and the teacher(s) or other school staff involved. If permission is granted, then the school principal/head of upper school and the external organization will then work with the Office of Legal Counsel regarding the creation of a customized media release form for the specific event. The school will then distribute that form to parents/guardians/caregivers to sign prior to the event. Only students who have signed media releases on file for the specific event will be able to be recorded, filmed, photographed, audiotaped or videotaped. However, no student can be excluded from participating in a school activity or learning experience due to the fact that they do not have a current signed media release on file. School staff are responsible for ensuring that all students are able to participate in any school activity or learning experience and that only those students who have current signed media releases on file are recorded, filmed, photographed, audiotaped or videotaped by the external organization for the specific event.

The school district notes, however, that with the proliferation of mobile digital and electronic media that the school district cannot control the actions of private individuals or organizations that are not part of or connected to the school district and that at school-related activities that are open to the public (e.g., athletic events, music concerts, school plays and/or graduations) students who are either participating or spectators may be recorded, filmed, photographed, audiotaped or videotaped.

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