



## About PTAC

### PTAC Purpose

The U.S. Department of Education's (ED) Institute of Education Sciences' National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has established a Privacy Technical Assistance (TA) Center. The Privacy TA Center is a “one-stop” resource for education stakeholders to learn about data privacy, confidentiality, and security practices related to student-level longitudinal data systems

### PTAC Background

NCES's State Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) program has awarded grants to supplement the development, building and use of statewide K-12 student-level longitudinal data systems since 2006. Since then, 74 SLDS grants have been provided to 42 State Education Agencies (SEAs). The increased use of these student-level data systems for education decision-making and reporting has led to questions about how best to protect student privacy. Additionally, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, through the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund program and the FY09 ARRA SLDS grants, increased the scope of SLDS from K-12 student data to include linkages to teacher, postsecondary, early childhood, and labor data. This expanded collection of student-level data across the entire spectrum of education sectors to workforce data has created potential issues relating to student privacy protection.

### PTAC Mission

The Privacy TA Center is designed to provide states with:

- A set of tools, resources, and other opportunities for states to receive assistance with privacy, security, and confidentiality of student-level longitudinal data systems.
- A means for states to share their best practices, documents, and other relevant resources in the areas of privacy, security, and confidentiality.
- A focal point for queries and responses to the privacy-related needs of State Education Agencies (SEAs), Local Education Agencies (LEAs), and Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) in a confidential, safe environment.
- A set of resources to promote compliance with FERPA and other best practices for ensuring the confidentiality and security of personally identifiable information.

## **Governance**

The Privacy TA Center, supported through a government contract, provides technical assistance to education stakeholders through a range of materials and activities. The Department's contractor is working with various individuals at ED, including NCES' chief statistician, a SLDS program officer, and representatives from the Office of General Counsel (OGC), the Performance Information Management Service (PIMS), and the Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO), among others, to produce and review privacy TA products.

## **PTAC Approach**

The Privacy TA Center will engage national experts from a variety of industries and federal agencies to bring their experience on technological issues regarding data security; legal issues regarding data sharing, access and use; policy issues regarding data governance processes; and statistical issues regarding the reporting and publishing of aggregate performance data.

## **PTAC Resources and Services**

The Center will provide timely information on privacy, confidentiality, and security practices and updated guidance through FAQs, a privacy toolkit containing commonly cited privacy resources and ED technical briefs, training materials for data administrators and data users, visits to SEAs, local education agencies, and institutions of higher education, a support center to respond to inquiries, and regional meetings for education stakeholders.

PTAC provides timely information on privacy, confidentiality, and security practices and updated guidance through privacy and security resources such as:

- issue briefs and white papers, including technical briefs from the U.S. Department of Education
- frequently asked questions
- links to useful online resources
- training materials for data administrators and data users
- regional meetings and lessons learned forums for education stakeholders
- site visits to state and local education agencies
- a help desk to respond to inquiries