

Policy on Parental Notification — Drug and Alcohol Violations

Western Connecticut State University (WCSU) is committed to the elimination of alcohol and drug abuse and misuse within the university community. Accordingly, the university has long held policies regarding the use of alcohol and drugs on campus.

In 1998, the Higher Education Reauthorization Act of 1998 (HERA) amended the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) to allow institutions of higher education to notify parents or guardians of students under the age of 21 of the final outcome of an alcohol or drug violation.

When this change was made to the rules, there was intense discussion across the country about many issues surrounding parental notification, particularly in regard to student development. Discussions at many levels (students, parents, administration, faculty and others) and experience at institutions across the country has overwhelmingly concluded that parental notification has played an important role in reducing the amount of repeat alcohol or drug violations among students, as well as strengthened the connection between the student, his or her family and the institution.

WCSU would like to pro-actively address these issues rather than react to them. It is therefore the intent of WCSU to adopt the following parental notification policy, both for incidents that occur on-campus and those that occur at off-campus university sanctioned events:

1. WCSU will notify by mail parents or guardians of students under the age of 21 (at the time of adjudication) that their son or daughter has been found responsible for violating the university's alcohol or drug policies. This will occur after a finding of responsibility for the second alcohol or drug offense, except in such cases detailed in #4.
2. Students whose parents will be notified of an alcohol or drug violation will be informed of such during the course of their judicial meetings with an investigative officer or the hearing officer after a finding of responsibility is made. This will allow the student to make contact with his or her parents or guardians prior to the letter arriving.
3. Letters will include resources available at the university and the nearby community to assist the student and his/her family should they wish to pursue counseling or other processes.
 - For resident students:
 - The associate director of Housing & Residence Life for Programs & Staff will issue a letter detailing the violation to the parents of a student found responsible for alcohol or drug policy violation.
 - For non-resident students:
 - This mailing will be from the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs.
4. In specific cases, the university will notify the parents or guardians of students under 21 years of age following a first violation. Examples of such cases may be as follows:

- the incident involved significant property damage;
- the incident involved a reckless disregard for the safety of themselves and/or others;
- the incident was accompanied by other serious violations of university policy.

The hearing officer, in conjunction with the dean of The Office Student Affairs, will determine if a letter should be sent to parents/guardians after a first violation.

5. If a student under the age of 21 is transported to the hospital because of drugs or alcohol, the university will contact via telephone the parents or guardians of that student to inform them of the potentially serious incident. The following procedure will be in place for such a situation:

- University Police will make the transport determination, in conjunction with EMS personnel.
- If the incident occurs at an off-campus, university sanctioned event, the advisor or university representative responsible for the event will contact the campus police, who will follow the procedures below (for non-resident students).
- The ADHRL/RD in the case of resident students, or the police in the case of non-resident students, will contact first the dean, or in the dean's absence, the vice president for Student Affairs.
- The dean or vice president will notify parents/guardians that an emergency has occurred with their son or daughter, and that a parent or guardian must come to the hospital to retrieve the student. The student will not be permitted to return to the residence halls or resume classes until the student and a parent or guardian has met with the dean of Student Affairs to discuss the incident and options for assistance available from the university and community resources.