

# 61.99.99.S0.01 Communication with Students by Text/SMS Messages



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## Procedure Statement

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To ensure student success, The Texas A&M University System operating at The RELLIS Campus communicates timely and effectively with prospective and current students. Text/SMS messaging is one of the methods of communication that Texas A&M University System-RELLIS Campus may use to communicate directly with students. Text/SMS messages sent by Texas A&M University System-RELLIS Campus using an automatic telephone dialing system must comply with the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA), 47 U.S.C. §227, and this procedure.

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## Definitions

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“Automatic telephone dialing system” means equipment which has the capacity to store or produce telephone numbers to be called, using a random or sequential number generator, and to dial such numbers. (47 U.S.C. §227(a)(1)). This definition applies to voice calls and text/SMS messages.

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## Procedure

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### 1. REQUIREMENTS

- 1.1 Any department/unit that sends text/SMS messages using an automatic telephone dialing system is responsible for complying with the TCPA and the following requirements:
  - a. Obtain prior express consent of the recipient of the text/SMS message;
  - b. Provide the recipient of text/SMS messages the option to opt-out of future text/SMS messages from the department/unit;
  - c. Send no further text/SMS messages if consent is withdrawn or the recipient opts out of future messages from the department/unit; and
  - d. Verify, at least annually, that the cell/mobile telephone numbers on the department's/unit's call list are current and remove any number(s) from the call list that cannot be verified.
  
- 1.2 The department/unit sending the text/SMS message using an automatic telephone dialing system is responsible for complying with the TCPA and this SAP whether the mobile/cell phone numbers are pulled from a central database or from a list created at the department/unit level.

2. BEST PRACTICES Text/SMS messages sent by an automatic telephone dialing system or by direct dialing, should follow these best practices to ensure that students remain in the texting program and do not opt-out due to an excessive number of texts:

2.1 Text/SMS messages should only be used to send students important and time sensitive official information, including emergency notifications, health and safety information, notices critical to student success, account information, registration, advising, and financial aid.

The Texas A&M University System-RELLIS Campus uses the Blinn College Alert System to send text notifications in the event of an emergency. Consent is not required for emergency alerts since they are required by federal law under the Clery Act. Students are automatically enrolled in emergency alerts, using cellular phone numbers provided to the home university and maintained in the student information system, but may opt out of receiving texts at any time.

2.2 Text/SMS messages must not be used for:

- a. General information to large populations i.e. “Fall classes start Monday”;
- b. Repeat reminders of messages already circulated; or
- c. Personal matters e.g., items for sales, farewell messages.

2.3 Text messages must not be the sole means of communicating an essential message or announcement. The text message must be supplemented by some other means of communication, e.g. an email or paper notice to ensure that all students, including those without a mobile phone, receive the message.

2.4 The number of text/SMS messages sent by the department/unit should not be excessive.

2.5 Text/SMS messages should not exceed 160 characters.

2.6 All approved officials must abide by all other Texas A&M University System policies and ensure:

- a. The message is valid;
- b. The wording is appropriate;
- c. The circulation list is correct; and
- d. The message is tagged with the appropriate identifier so recipients of the text can see where it originated.

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## **Related Statutes, Policies, or Requirements**

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Telephone Consumer Protection Act, 47 U.S. Code §227

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## **Contact Office**

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RELLIS Academic Alliance

61.99.99.S0.01 Communication with Students by Text/SMS Messages

Page 2 of 2