Pennsylvania
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Records Management Overview

What is a record?

- Any recorded information, regardless of physical form or format, that documents a transaction or activity of a department, board, or commission and that is created, received or retained pursuant to law or in connection with the transaction of official business.

    - Formats
        - Paper
        - Microfilm
        - Electronic records* (machine readable)
        - Audio/Visual
        - Cartoghraphic (maps)
        - Photographic

*Electronic records may consist of *server-based or mainframe applications or systems, databases, correspondence, spreadsheets, word processing documents, presentations, e-mail, reports, web-based information, etc.*

Media may consist of *CD's, DVD's, Floppy Disks, Zip Disks, PC Hard Drives, and Network Drives, etc.*

What is a non-record?

- Materials that do not meet the definition of a record and are not subject to litigation or other legal proceedings. *Non-records may be disposed of when they have no more value or use to the agency.*
    - These materials relate to non-governmental business or activities, such as announcements for events, parties, etc.
    - Non-records may also include *extra copies of correspondence and other documents preserved only for convenience of reference, sample letters, blank forms, routing and other interdepartmental forms which do not add any significant material to the activity concerned, publications such as trade journals, pamphlets and reference materials received from outside organizations, conferences and workshops.*

What is records management?

- Records management is the systematic control of recorded information from the time it is created until its final disposition.

- The Commonwealth's Records Management (RM) Program is established to control the creation, use, maintenance, preservation, and disposition of records of state agencies.

- The Secretary of Administration issues all Management Directives regarding the Commonwealth's RM Program.

- **Management Directive 210.5, Records Management**, requires that:
  - **All records, regardless of form or format**, must be scheduled and properly disposed of in accordance with one of the existing general records retention and disposition schedules or the agency-specific records retention and disposition schedule.

- The *State Records Management Manual, M210.7,* establishes guidelines for the management of state government records.

Why manage records?

- Objectives:
  - ✓ Ensure records are being properly maintained and accounted for;
  - ✓ Furnish accurate and complete information when required to do so;
  - ✓ Assure that unnecessary records are destroyed and important records are retained and accessible when needed;
  - ✓ Reduce liability risks;
  - ✓ Capture and preserve an agency's performance, accomplishments and achievements;
  - ✓ Identify and protect vital records; and
  - ✓ Identify and preserve historical records.

Who is responsible for managing records?

- Agency heads are charged with establishing and maintaining a continuing program for the economical and efficient management of their agency's records.
- Agency Records Coordinator (RC) are appointed by Agency heads and have agency-wide responsibility for managing and coordinating records management activities.
- All professional, administrative, technical and support staff share responsibility for identification, classification, retention and disposition of information within their respective areas.
- The State Archives, in conformance with the Administrative, History, and Judicial Codes and the County and Municipal Records Acts, works

to ensure the permanent preservation of records that document significant government functions, policies, and decisions and the information they contain on persons, places, and historical events.

How do we manage Commonwealth records?

- By use of records retention and disposition schedules (RRDS).
- An RRDS is a comprehensive statement showing retention periods and all actions to be taken with respect to the disposition of records
- An RRDS lists:
    - Each records series;
    - Indicates the length of time each series is to be maintained in a prescribed format;
    - The location where the records are to be stored; and
    - The approved disposition.
- There are two types of schedules used by state agencies to manage records:
    - Commonwealth's general schedules; or
    - An agency's specific schedule.
- All schedules are:
    - Approved by the Executive Board; and
    - Provide continuing authorization for the disposition of records that have met the designated retention periods.

- **The Commonwealth's General Records Retention and Disposition Schedules** control the disposition of records relating to common functions performed by or for most state agencies.
    - **General Accounting (dated 3/7/91);**
    - **General Personnel (M505.4 dated 12/7/98); and**
    - **General Records Retention and Disposition Schedule (continuous update)**

- **Agency-specific Records Retention and Disposition Schedules** are:
    - Prepared by state agencies;
    - Capture and control agency-specific records not covered by any of the above-listed Commonwealth schedules.

Important Notes!

►Records appraisal for historical value is part of the Commonwealth's records analysis and scheduling process.

Under the Administrative and History Codes, the PHMC is responsible for identifying government records, regardless of format, that have enduring value and for preserving those records for use by future generations.

►Records that do not appear on an approved RRDS cannot be purged or destroyed without approval by the Executive Board.

►Approval must also be obtained before destroying inactive and/or unscheduled records.

►For disposal of records for discontinued programs currently on the records schedule, or when records are discovered relating to a discontinued program that is not listed on the agency's records retention and disposition schedule, contact your Agency Records Coordinator for assistance.

What forms do you complete to manage records?

On-line forms are located at:
<u>www. phmc.state.pa.us</u>
<u>Records Management</u>
<u>State Government</u>

1. <u>To add to or modify a record series</u>, the following forms are required:
   - STD-56 – Records Action Requests Summary and Deletions
2. <u>To add to, modify or delete a record series</u>, the following forms are required:
   - STD-56 – Records Action Requests Summary and Deletions
   - STD-64 – Records Action Request: Addition or Amendment to Records Retention and Disposition Schedules
3. <u>To transfer records</u> to the State Records Center (SRC) or the State Archives:

- ➢ Complete one of the STD-59 - Records Transfer List (of STD-59-P79 for personnel files or STD-59-GS for General Schedule items); then
  - E-mail the STD-59 to your Agency RC for approval and coordination of a shipment date.

3. <u>To request records</u> from the SRC:
   - ➢ Individuals designated as "Authorized Personnel" should complete an
     STD-61 - Reference Request; then,
     - E-mail the STD-61 directly to the SRC at <u>RA-StateRecordsCenter@state.pa.us.</u>

4. <u>For records that are eligible for disposal/destruction by the agency:</u>
   - ➢ Complete a Records Disposition Report, STD-62.

All of the above forms, except the STD-61, should be submitted to your Agency Records Coordinator (RC) who will:

- Review the forms;
- Return for additional information and/or correction; and
- Submit to PHMC for processing and approval by Executive Board.

Detailed instructions for completion of the above forms can be found in the *Appendix 3* of the *State Records Management Manual, M210.7.*

If at any time you have questions or are in need of direct assistance in managing your records, contact your Agency RC.

Where do you start?
Action Plan

<u>Step 1:</u>
Review the existing records schedules:

- ✓ Check the <u>Commonwealth's General Records Retention and Disposition Schedules</u> (RRDS) and <u>your Agency-specific RRDS</u> to determine if the record is listed.

<u>Step 2:</u>
If the record series is listed:

- ✓ Review the retention period and disposition code.
- ✓ Match series item number with actual records in the files.

- ✓ Properly dispose of records that have met their full retention period according to the disposition code. Complete required transfer and/or disposition forms.

Step 3:
If the record series does not appear on the RRDS:

- ✓ **Add the new record series** by completing an STD-56, Records Action Request: Addition or Amendment to Records Retention and Disposition Schedules
- ✓ Take time to adequately describe the information in your records when completing the STD-64; and,
    - o Do not leave any blanks – complete all sections.
    - o All records retention must be justified, but records that are to be retained 10 years or longer will particularly need a justification identifying the specific requirements.

Step 4:
If the record series is listed on the Agency-specific RRDS but information pertaining to the records series needs to be changed and/or updated to reflect current business operations, **modify (amend) the existing record**:

- ✓ STD-56, Records Action Request: Addition or Amendment to Records Retention and Disposition Schedules

Step 5:
If the record series is no longer needed, **delete the record series:**

- ✓ Complete an STD-56 – Records Action Requests Summary and Deletions.

Step 6:
Submit all completed forms to your Agency RC for review, approval and processing to the PHMC.

- ✓ Upon issuance and receipt of the Executive Board Resolution, your agency RC will provide an updated schedule to you.
- ✓ Retain and follow the schedule; update as needed.

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Tips for Maintaining Files

Technology has made it easier to store information electronically, yet it hasn't significantly reduced the amount of paper we handle regularly. Whether you have paper or electronic records, setting up an efficient filing system, purging old documents, and knowing where your records are stored will make finding the information you need when you need it easier.

- Comply with approved Records Retention and Disposition Schedules
  Note: All records should be maintained, managed and disposed of in accordance with a Commonwealth-approved schedule.
- Implement a fiscal or calendar year cut-off.
- Dispose of non-records
- Create new folders when they have reached their capacity (75 sheets)
- File at least fifteen (15) minutes every day.
- Where applicable, appoint one person to be held accountable for the files in your office. This person will have the authority to control the access and use of the files.
- Identify and protect vital records.
- Label your file cabinet drawers with the records series title(s) and schedule item number(s). Also, label your file folders.
- Maintain in front of your filing cabinet an STD-57, Records Inventory and Analysis Form, for each record series; or, you can retain a File Plan.

4. Nest folders within folders.
Create other folders within these main folders as need arises. For instance, a folder called "Invoices" might contain folders called "2004", "2005" and "2006". A folder named for a client might include the folders "customerdata" and "correspondence". The goal is to have every file in a folder rather than having a bunch of orphan files listed.

5. Follow the file naming conventions.
Do not use spaces in file names, keep file names under 27 characters, and use all lower case. So a file named for a client should be jackdawson rather than Jack Dawson. If you break any of these rules, be consistent about it.

6. Be specific.
Give files logical, specific names and include dates in file names if possible. The goal when naming files is to be able to tell what the file is about without having to open it and look. So if the document is a letter to a customer reminding him that payment is overdue, call it something like "overdue081206" rather than something like "letter". How will you know who the letter is to without opening it? See the next point.

7. File as you go.
The best time to file a document is when you first create it. So get in the habit of using the "Save As" dialogue box to file your document as well as name it, putting it in the right place in the first place.

8. Order your files for your convenience.
If there are folders or files that you use a lot, force them to the top of the file list by renaming them with a ! or an AA at the beginning of the file name.

9. Cull your files regularly.
Sometimes what's old is obvious as in the example of the folder named "Invoices" above. If it's not, keep your folders uncluttered by clearing out the old files. Do NOT delete business related files unless you are absolutely certain that you will never need the file again. Instead, in your main collection of folders in My Documents, create a folder called "Old" or "Inactive" and move old files into it when you come across them.

10. Back up your files regularly.
Whether you're copying your files onto another drive or onto tape, it's important to set up and follow a regular back up regimen. See The 3 Steps to a Successful Backup System for more information.

The search function is a wonderful thing but it will never match the ease of being able to go directly to a folder or file. If you follow these file management tips consistently, even if you don't know where something is, you know where it should be – a huge advantage when it comes to finding what you're looking for.