



# Preserving and disposing of government records

## Part 3 of a webinar series on records retention

MDH Center for Public Health Practice  
February 2022





## Records retention webinar series

1. Records and information management
2. Records retention schedule
- 3. Preserving and disposing of government records**
4. Essential records management

**Full webinar series:** [www.health.mn.gov](http://www.health.mn.gov); search for “records retention”





## Agenda

- Refresher: Records
- Disposition methods
  - Destroy
  - Keep permanently
  - Transfer, preservation
- Conservation





## Why records retention?

Records retention saves us time, space, and money.

It allows us to concentrate on doing our work.

It ensures we're accountable to Minnesotans.





## Records and record series



- **Record:** Any documentation or information created and stored at an organization that is essential to the functioning of that organization, regardless of the format or medium
- **Record series:** A group of similar documents used for the same activity or function



## What is/isn't a record?

### What is a record?

- Documents transaction of public business
- Created or received in course of work
- Can be open or closed
- Any medium

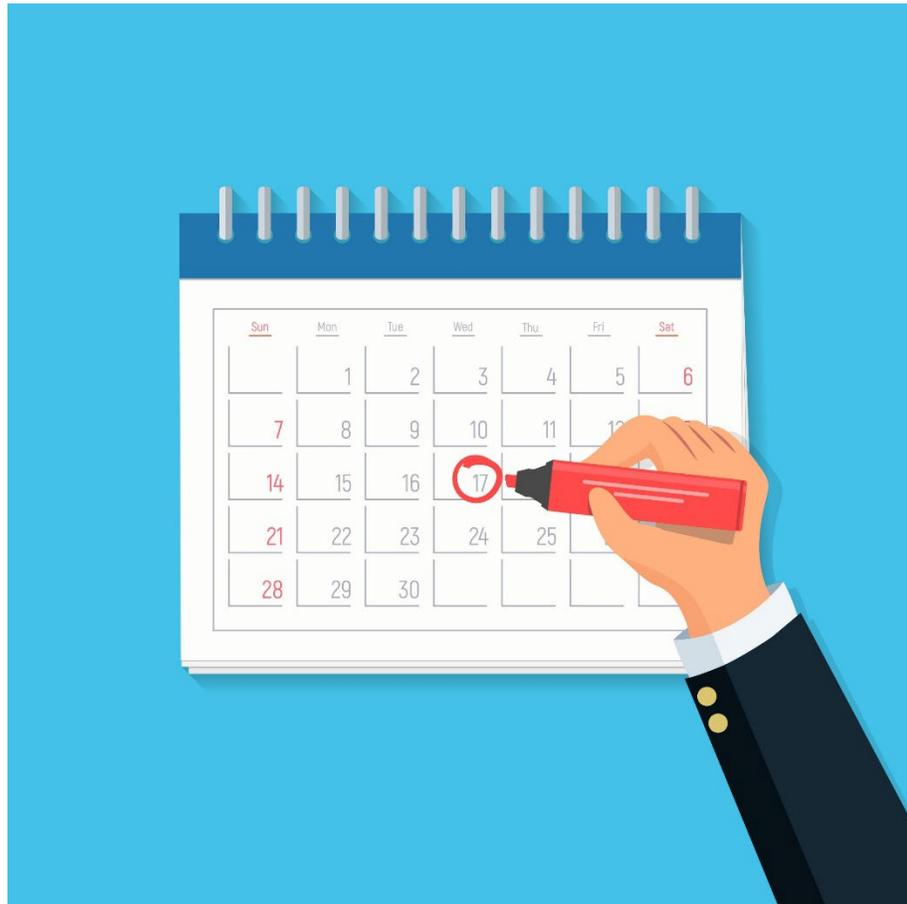
### What is not a record?

- Duplicates
- Copies
- Blank forms or stocks of publications
- Library/reference materials
- Personal correspondence





# What is a records retention schedule?



A records retention schedule is a clearly defined plan that determines how long a record has value and how it should be disposed of.





## What is disposition?

- Final stage in a record's lifecycle
  - Destroy (frequent)
  - Keep permanently (depends on the record)
  - Transfer to another entity (rare)
- Authorized by your agency's records schedule or by "Application for Authority to Dispose of Records"
- Maintain a list of destroyed records





## Methods of records disposition

- **Recycle** public records, non record material and non-sensitive information
- **Shred** sensitive, confidential, and classified personal records and information
- **Expunge** electronic files, databases, email



## Archival: How to determine and preserve

- Historical records:
  - Some have permanent value: Retain at your agency
  - Some have permanent **archival** value: Transfer to State Archives
- Archival determined by:
  - Evidential value, documenting state/local government existence and operations
  - Informational value; helpful to future researchers
- Contact State Archives to transfer archival records, including those not listed on a records schedule.





# Calculating disposal dates

## Event-based disposition plan

- Example: Time and attendance
- Date range: 1/1/2014-12/31/2015
- Retention: Destroy after audit or when six years old, whichever is first

### Disposal date calculation:

- Ending date of records: 12/31/2015
- Retention requirements: 6 years
- Must be retained until: 12/31/2021
- **Disposal date: 1/1/2022**

## Fixed time disposition plan

- Example: Travel vouchers
- Date range: 1/1/2014-12/31/2015
- Retention: Destroy six years and three months after period covering accounts

### Disposal date calculation:

- Ending date of records: 12/31/2015
- Retention requirements: 6yr + 3mo
- Must be retained until: 3/31/2022
- **Disposal date: 4/1/2022**





## Accidental disposition

- Accidental disposition includes removing, defacing, altering, destroying
- Prevent accidental disposition:
  - Enact policies and procedures
  - Make sure all staff and contractors understand records retention
- If accidental disposition occurs, notify your chief administrative officer and the State Archives.



## Conserving records

- Sometimes records are accidentally damaged:
  - Inadequate storage
  - Improper handling
  - Overuse
  - Accident (water damage, etc.)
- Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) lab can conserve documents; contact MHS immediately after you recognize the emergency: [www.mnhs.org/preserve/conservation](http://www.mnhs.org/preserve/conservation)





## Exceptions to disposition

- Common exceptions:
  - Litigation
  - Audit
  - Open records request
- Disposing records in these situations could result in penalties
- Recommendation: Develop an internal process for placing legal holds on these documents



## Records not on a schedule

- Occurs when you've missed records during initial audit
- Either:
  - Add them to your retention schedule, or
  - List them on "Application for Authority to Dispose of Records" (left), and submit for approval to State Records Disposition Panel







## Proper disposition

- Dispose of records routinely
- Do so promptly at the end of the retention period
- Document if/when you need to retain a record beyond the retention period, and revisit it regularly
- If your schedule says destroy, place the record in the appropriate receptacle and observe applicable security measures; no need to notify State Archives
- Records Destruction Report = authorization to destroy





# Records Disposition Report

- Maintain a list of disposed records
- No need to track convenience copies or duplicates
- Recommendation: File with your retention schedule

Online:  
[www.mnhs.org/preserve/records](http://www.mnhs.org/preserve/records)



## RECORDS DESTRUCTION REPORT

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Print or type all information.
2. Use this form to report records destroyed under authority of a General Records Retention schedule or an approved agency retention schedule.
3. Report only records that are physically destroyed, not records transferred to the Minnesota Historical Society.

Agency		Person Reporting Destruction			Date Report Submitted	
Address		City, Zip			Telephone ( )	
General Schedule Name or Agency Schedule Number (e.g. "City Gen. Sch." or "87-123")	Section of Schedule Where Record is Listed	Item No. As Listed on Schedule	Record Title (use same title listed on schedule)	Inclusive Dates	Date Destroyed	Quantity* (Cubic Feet)
<b>**VOLUME CHART TO DETERMINE CUBIC FEET</b> Letter Size Drawer = 1.5      Record Center Box = 1.0      3 x 5 Card = 0.1      Total Cubic Feet Destroyed (include records listed on back) Legal Size Drawer = 2.0      12" x 15" x 10"      4 x 6 Card = 0.2 Shelving 4 Letter = 2.3      Transfer Case = 2.5      5 x 8 Card = 0.3 Shelving 4 Legal = 3.0      24" x 16" x 11"      Printouts 1 = 1.25						



## Questions on disposition

- Contact your county administrator or your records manager
- Visit the Minnesota Historical Society:  
[www.mnhs.org/preserve/records](http://www.mnhs.org/preserve/records)





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4. **Managing essential records in emergencies**

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**Thank you.**

