



D E P A R T M E N T O F

# Management & Budget

## STATE OF MICHIGAN RECORDS MANAGEMENT MANUAL FOR STATE EMPLOYEES

Records Management Services

October 1, 2009

## I. INTRODUCTION

This manual has been prepared for employees of the State of Michigan. It is designed to provide basic information about public records and the records management responsibilities of each state employee.

### RECORDS MANAGEMENT SERVICES

The State of Michigan's centralized records management program was initially created in 1952 in response to problems caused by inconsistent and inefficient records retention practices. The program currently operates under MCL 18.1284 – 1292 and is an agency within the Department of Management and Budget. The purpose of the records management program is to instruct Executive Branch agencies about the management their records; in order to provide for the administrative, fiscal, legal and historical needs of government and to protect the rights and safety of Michigan's citizens. The State Records Center provides off-site storage for state government records.

Records Management Services is responsible for:

- the establishment of procedures, standards and techniques for records management activities;
- the operation of a records center to house inactive records for state government;
- the development and approval of Retention and Disposal Schedules;
- providing training to state employees about all aspects of records management; and
- providing centralized microfilming and digital imaging services.

Questions about records management services, including: microfilming, digital imaging and records storage may be addressed to:

Records Management Services  
P.O. Box 30026  
3400 N. Grand River Ave.  
Lansing, Michigan 48909  
(517) 335-9132  
(517) 321-3408 (fax)  
<http://www.michigan.gov/recordsmanagement/>

## II. WHAT IS A PUBLIC RECORD?

A **public record** is “a writing prepared, owned, used, in the possession of, or retained by a public body in the performance of an official function, from the time it is created.” (M.C.L. 15.231-15.232)

### A. THE VALUE OF PUBLIC RECORDS

Public records have many forms and formats. Records can be letters, memos, reports, maps, photographs, microfilm, e-mail messages, word processed documents, and databases, etc. Public records are often created for one specific purpose, and then are used for a variety of other reasons. This use reflects the value that the record has to its creator, and others who seek information contained in the record. Public records need to be retained as long as they have value, and should be destroyed when their value ceases to exist. Retention and Disposal Schedules, developed by Records Management Services, identify how long records must be retained by the office of creation because of their operational, fiscal and legal values, and they identify if/when the records can be transferred to the Archives of Michigan because of their historical/archival value. Each of these values is defined below:

- *Operational value* is the first and primary value of all records. It exists at the time of creation, and lasts until the creator and primary users cease to actively use the record. All other values are secondary to this value.
- *Fiscal value* exists as long as the record documents any unsettled financial transaction. These records include receipts, statistics, etc. Fiscal value usually extends until an audit of the transaction takes place.
- *Legal value* exists as long as the record is discoverable in a court of law. Some records have retention periods that are established by law; other records document an activity that is subject to litigation. It is important to recognize that some records are disposed of routinely, according to a retention and disposal schedule so the office of creation cannot be held liable for the contents of the record. However, no records may be destroyed when legal action is taking place. Penalties for inappropriately destroying a record (obstruction of justice) are severe.
- *Historical/Archival value* exists when records document significant government activities, or when they contain information about Michigan’s population that warrants their permanent preservation.

As referenced above, the legal definition of a public record is quite broad. Almost all records that state employees work with are considered public records. Despite the fact

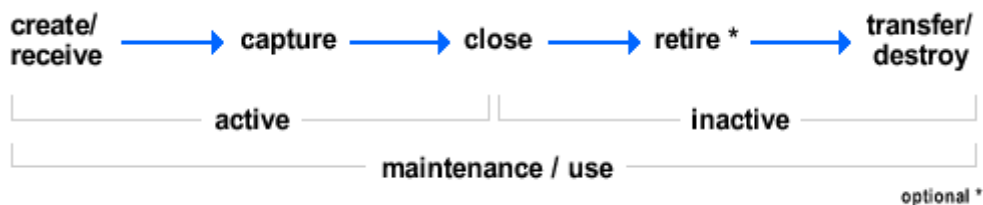
that state employees may store records in a file cabinet in their cubicle, or on the computer at their desk, these records are in no sense the personal property of an individual state employee. Personal records are related to one's own employment, benefits, insurance, or finances. Personal records should not be stored with public records, and generally should not be kept in the office.

## NONRECORDS

Not all recorded information is considered to be a record. Some information fits the definition of a "nonrecord." In accordance with "General Schedule #1--Nonrecords" that was approved by the State Administrative Board on December 15, 1998, nonrecords may be destroyed "as soon as they have served their intended purpose." Generally speaking, examples of nonrecords include phone messages, extra copies of documents or duplicates, drafts, "for your information" courtesy copies, routing slips, notices about community events, etc., and catalogs or other publications received from outside sources that are not essential to the operation of the agency.

## B. RECORDS LIFECYCLE

The records lifecycle is the life span of a record from its creation or receipt to its final disposition, during which the following events occur:



Records are maintained and used throughout two lifecycle phases:

- **Active records** are used to conduct current agency business and are maintained in computers, office space and equipment.
- **Inactive records** are not needed for current business and are generally maintained in less expensive off-site storage.

A record begins as a document that is created or received. If that document meets the definition of a record, it should be captured in a recordkeeping system. When the record is not needed for current agency business, it is closed and optionally retired to off-site storage. Finally, the record is either destroyed or transferred to the Archives of Michigan. Approved records Retention and Disposal Schedules identify which records are to be destroyed and which records are to be preserved permanently at the Archives, and when these activities occur. In addition, schedules identify if select records can be stored temporarily at the State Records Center during their inactive phase.

### **III. RETENTION AND DISPOSAL SCHEDULES**

#### **A. PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE**

Each day state government agencies create, receive, transmit and store huge volumes of letters, e-mail messages, computer printouts, contracts, databases, receipts, vouchers and countless other records. The information contained in these records must be properly managed so that it is preserved and readily available for reference when it is needed. It is also important that these records are disposed of at the appropriate time, and in a systematic manner, so they do not waste space or become a liability to the agency.

Records analysts employed by Records Management Services develop Retention and Disposal Schedules. Schedules are comprehensive inventories of all public records, regardless of their physical format. Schedules define how long each record should be retained, and they explain how a record's retention period is divided between the creating office and the State Records Center, if applicable. The State Records Center provides off-site storage for many records that are not actively used by the creating agency. Retention and Disposal Schedules also indicate which records have archival value, and when those records should be transferred to the Archives of Michigan.

According to Michigan law, no public records may be destroyed without the authorization of an approved Retention and Disposal Schedule. This law exists to prevent the destruction of public information as the result of the opinion of a single state employee. Retention and Disposal Schedules are submitted to the agency, the Records Management Services, the Auditor General, the Attorney General, the Archives of Michigan, and the State Administrative Board for their respective approvals. Approved Retention and Disposal Schedules have the force of law.

The purpose of a Retention and Disposal Schedule is to provide a systematic means of controlling the creation, storage and disposal of records. It is based upon thousands of Federal Statutes and regulations, plus state and local requirements and the agency's fiscal and administrative needs. Adherence to a Retention and Disposal Schedule will assist agencies with their compliance with these requirements. Serious problems can and do arise from not having an accurate schedule or by not following the schedule that has been established. Grievances, criminal prosecution, Freedom of Information requests, evidence of payments and endless other daily activities all require records to be available efficiently and promptly.

Note: Agencies must immediately cease the destruction of all relevant records (even if destruction is authorized by an approved Retention and Disposal Schedule) if they receive a FOIA request, if they believe that an investigation or litigation is imminent, or if they are notified that an investigation or litigation has commenced. If relevant records exist in electronic formats (such as e-mail, digital images, word processed

documents, databases, etc.), the agency may need to notify the Department of Information Technology. Failure to cease the destruction of relevant records could result in penalties.

## B. THE INVENTORY PROCESS

When records analysts prepare Retention and Disposal Schedules they conduct inventories of all of the public records used by a particular office, even if the records will never be stored at the State Records Center. The inventory process will include the surveying of filing cabinet contents, and a discussion about databases or other electronic records used by the office. The analyst will identify why records are created, and how they are used. This information will be used to define the operational values of the various records. Special inventory forms are used to ensure that adequate information is gathered about each records series.

## C. GENERAL RETENTION SCHEDULES

General Retention Schedules are developed to address categories of records that are common to most offices in state government. General Schedules are intended to efficiently promote uniformity of retention periods and consistency in government practices. With the exception of General Schedule #1 for nonrecords, the records described on the General Schedules are 1) deemed necessary for the continued effective operation of state government, 2) constitute an adequate and proper recording of agency activities, 3) protect the legal rights of the government of the State of Michigan and of the people.

All public records that are not listed on a General Schedule must be inventoried on agency-specific schedules. If a record is listed both on a General Schedule and on an agency-specific schedule, the agency should follow its specific schedule, instead of the General Schedule. However, agencies are not required to create a record that is listed on a General Schedule. The retention periods listed on General Schedules only apply to agencies that actually create those records.

The following is a listing of the General Schedules that have been issued by the State of Michigan. Copies of these schedules may be obtained from the Records Management Services at (517) 335-9132.

- General Schedule #1--Non-Records (Approved December 15, 1998)
- General Schedule #2--Accounting Records (Approved January 18, 1983)
- General Schedule #3--Personnel Office Records (Approved October 6, 1981)
- General Schedule #4--Employee Personnel File - Active Employees (Approved March 5, 1996)
- General Schedule #5--Administrative Records (Approved January 17, 2006)
- General Schedule #6--Accounting and Purchasing Records (Approved March 20, 2001)
- General Schedule #7--Human Resource Records (Approved December 2, 2003)

## D. DEFINITIONS OF RETENTION CODES

The **retention codes** that appear on Records Retention and Disposal Schedules are used to establish how long records are retained by the creating agency before they are destroyed (or transferred to the State Archives for permanent retention). Retention codes determine how destruction dates will be automatically calculated by Versatile (Versatile is the records management software that is used by Records Management Services to manage the retention of records), and the date upon which the calculation will be based. When one of these codes is assigned to a record series, Versatile knows how to calculate retention for any items sent to the State Record Center for storage.

In addition to the retention code, a period of time, years and/or months, can be used in the calculation. Years are expressed as whole numbers, and months are expressed as fractions. For example, the fraction "0/6" would represent 6 months. The retention code plus the period of time results in a mathematical formula to determine a disposal date.

Agencies can also use this formula to calculate a destruction date for records that are maintained in their offices.

### **ACT = Active**

An active code is usually assigned to records that are case or project related. The records are retained "until the case or project is closed." This code can also be applied to records where a subjective decision is needed to determine when the records become inactive, as with a subject file. The record is retained "until it is determined to be inactive." The retention period is applied when the ACT condition has been met. For instance, a case file might be retained until the case is closed (ACT) plus five years. Active should be defined in the last sentence of the series description.

### **CR = Creation**

A creation code is assigned to records when a definitive retention period can be assigned. The retention period is usually based on a calendar year and where there are no conditions that must be met. For instance, correspondence has a two-year retention period. The retention period begins from the date the correspondence is created or received.

### **EXP = Expiration**

An expiration code is typically assigned to contracts, grants or other types of agreements that must be retained until an expiration date or other legal condition has been met. For instance, contracts may be held until contract expiration (EXP) plus six years.

**FY = Fiscal Year**

A fiscal year code is similar to a CR code. The code is assigned to records when a definitive retention period can be assigned, however the retention is based on a fiscal year rather than a calendar year. This retention code is usually assigned to accounting records and their supporting documentation.

**SUP = Superseded**

A superseded code is typically assigned to records that are updated or revised at various times during the records lifetime. Examples would include policies or procedures. As a policy is updated and the old version is replaced or superseded, only the current version is needed.

**EVT = Event**

Event codes are assigned to records when a retention period is based on a future action or condition. We use this code when we know that a future action or condition will be met, but we don't know exactly when it will happen. For instance, deeds are retained to document the ownership of land by the State of Michigan. If and when the State of Michigan divests itself of that land, a retention period can be applied to the records. The records will be retained until the State of Michigan sells the land (EVT). The event should be defined in the last sentence of the series description.

**DISP = Immediate Disposal**

Immediate Disposal is a retention code that is used when an agency requires an authorization to destroy obsolete records upon the approval of their Records Retention and Disposal Schedule. Once the Retention Schedule is approved the agency has the legal authority to destroy the obsolete records.

**PERM = Permanent**

These records are not authorized for destruction at any point in time, and will be retained in the custody of the creating agency.

## **IV. RECORDS MANAGEMENT SERVICES**

Records Management Services has two types of liaisons who can provide various records management services to agencies. You can call (517) 335-9132 to find out who your liaison is.

### **A. RECORDS MANAGEMENT OFFICERS (RMO)**

Records Management Officers (RMO) are individuals who are appointed by a department director to supervise and coordinate the department's records management program. RMOs serve as liaisons with the Records Management Services and the Archives of Michigan. Records Management Officers are responsible for:

- Requesting new records Retention and Disposal Schedules from the Records Management Services when current schedules become outdated or when an agency's organizational structure changes.
- Maintaining a complete set of Retention and Disposal Schedules for their department.
- Familiarizing staff within their department about the use of Retention and Disposal Schedules, as well as good recordkeeping and filing skills.
- Ensuring that records are transferred out of the office of creation at the scheduled time.
- Providing instructions for preparing records for transmittal to the State Records Center and to the Archives of Michigan.
- Providing instructions for requesting that the Records Center return records that need to be referenced by the creating office.
- Planning and assisting in all records management training sessions conducted for individual agencies.
- Receiving, reviewing, obtaining approvals and returning all Records Disposal Notices for each unit within a department.

### **B. RECORDS ANALYST SERVICES**

Records analysts are employed by Records Management Services to provide specialized records management services to government agencies. They develop Retention and Disposal Schedules, assist with the design of recordkeeping systems, train state employees, and provide other valuable services. Each of the records analysts are assigned several departments that they assist with all records management activities. Both RMOs and state employees can contact the records analyst who serves as their department's liaison.

## V. ARCHIVES OF MICHIGAN

In 1913 the Michigan State Legislature passed Public Act 271 creating the Michigan Historical Commission and giving the commission the authority “to collect, arrange and preserve historical material.” This legislation was the beginning of the Archives of Michigan, now in the Department of Natural Resources, as an entity devoted primarily to preserving governmental records. The Archives of Michigan continues to identify and acquire state and local government records that must be preserved permanently. The Archives makes the records in its holdings available to the public for research and reference, unless access to the records is restricted by law.

Less than 5% of the public records created by Michigan’s government have a value that warrants their permanent preservation. However, every government agency has the potential to produce records that must be preserved permanently. These records are identified on Retention and Disposal Schedules for permanent retention.

The Archives of Michigan selects certain public records for permanent preservation for a variety of reasons. For example, records like minutes, policies, legislative files, and project reports may document how government operates and how the role government has evolved over time. Records like birth certificates, naturalization records, military records, election records and land records may be preserved because they protect the rights of Michigan’s citizens. Whereas records like censuses, cancer registries, maps, photographs, and urban/rural surveys document various aspects of Michigan’s population. All of these records, and many more, are unique valuable sources of information that need to be kept safe for future generations of Michigianians.

Questions about transferring records to the Archives of Michigan or accessing records stored at the Archives may be addressed to:

Archives of Michigan  
Department of Natural Resources  
702 West Kalamazoo  
Lansing, Michigan 48909-8240  
(517) 373-1408  
(517) 241-1658 (fax)  
<http://www.michigan.gov/archivesofmi/>

## VI. PROCEDURES

Retention and Disposal Schedules indicate when records should be destroyed, transferred to the State Records Center for temporary storage, or sent to the Archives of Michigan for permanent preservation. Specific procedures have been developed for all of these activities, and they are published in the *DMB Administrative Manual to State Government*.

### A. TRANSFERRING RECORDS TO THE STATE RECORDS CENTER AND THE ARCHIVES OF MICHIGAN

The State Records Center provides for the temporary storage of inactive state government records. Records stored at the State Records Center remain under the exclusive control of the creating agency, and may only be accessed by individuals with authorization for the agency. The State Records Center has fire and security protection for all records in its custody. The State Records Center is located at 3400 N. Grand River Ave. in Lansing, approximately three miles North of downtown.

The Archives of Michigan is responsible for the permanent preservation of public records that document significant government activities. Records that are transferred to the Archives are protected from tampering, theft, fire and environmental damage. All records transferred to the Archives are carefully preserved so they will remain available to future generations. The Archives of Michigan is located in the Michigan Library and Historical Center building at 702 West Kalamazoo, west of the State Capitol in downtown Lansing.

Records arrive at the Archives in one of two ways. Some records are sent to the State Records Center for temporary storage before they are transferred to the Archives. In these situations, the Records Center automatically ships the records to the Archives at the appropriate time. Other records are transferred by agencies directly to the Archives, and therefore never spend time in the State Records Center.

The State Records Center and the Archives of Michigan use the same software, Versatile Enterprise, to manage records in our custody. As a result, we developed uniform procedures for transferring records to both facilities. See Procedure 0910.03 for instructions about shipping records.

## B. ACCESSING RECORDS STORED AT THE STATE RECORDS CENTER

Records stored in the State Records Center may be accessed by the creating agency in many ways. State employees may visit the State Records Center to access the records they need to use, or the State Records Center will ship records back to the creating agency (usually within one day) via interdepartmental mail. Requests for the retrieval of records stored at the State Records Center must be submitted using Versatile. Exceptions are arranged with select agencies that cannot access Versatile. See Procedure 0910.04 for instructions about accessing records stored at the State Records Center.

## C. ACCESSING RECORDS PRESERVED BY THE ARCHIVES OF MICHIGAN

The Archives organizes, describes and indexes all of the records in its custody to help researchers find the information they need. All records at the Archives are open to state employees and the public for research, unless a law requires that the record be kept confidential. State employees are encouraged to contact and visit the Archives to use the records from their agency or other government agencies. Reference archivists can help determine which records will be of use to researchers and can answer many questions by phone, fax, interdepartmental mail, e-mail or on-site visit. State employees who know the Records Center Lot Number, the Archives Accession Number or the Barcode Number that was assigned to the records when they were shipped out of the office will be able to find the records they are seeking much faster than those who do not.

The Archives of Michigan carefully protects the records in its custody because they are unique and valuable. As a result, all researchers are required to complete a registration form when they visit, and the storage areas are closed. All records are brought into a monitored reading room for use by researchers, and may not be removed from the Archives facility. Therefore, they will not be returned or loaned to an agency. Agency records in the custody of the Archives are preserved in storage rooms that have state-of-the-art security (theft and fire) and environmental protection (temperature and humidity). Materials can be photocopied at no charge to state agencies. However, there is a fee for photographic reproductions.

The reading room is open to the public Monday and Thursday (9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.), Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday (1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.). The Archives is closed on state holidays. Advance appointments are not required, but they may make research visits more worthwhile. Additional information about the records that are preserved at the Archives of Michigan, and the research services that are available, can be obtained from the Archives' web site at: <http://www.michigan.gov/archivesofmi/>

#### D. RECORDS CENTER DISPOSAL PROCESS

In accordance with Retention and Disposal Schedules, on a regular basis the State Records Center identifies records in its holdings that may be destroyed because they no longer have value to the State. In addition, some of the records stored at the Records Center are eventually transferred to the Archives. As this occurs, Records Disposal Notices are prepared, and are sent to the creating agency for approval before any record destruction or transfer to the Archives takes place. See Procedure 0910.05 for instructions about handling Records Disposal Notices.

#### E. DESTRUCTION OF RECORDS BY AGENCIES

In some instances, public records complete their entire retention period in the office of creation. In accordance with the provisions of an approved Retention and Disposal Schedule, agencies may destroy these records.

##### Confidential Records Destruction

Some public records contain sensitive or confidential information. These records should not be placed in a regular trash or recycle bin when they are eligible to be destroyed. It is important that agencies ensure that these records be destroyed in a manner that prevents the inappropriate release of the information. The State of Michigan administers a master contract with a vendor that complies with the state's requirements for confidential destruction of records. Agencies that are interested in using this contract should contact the vendor:

Rapid Shred  
Attention: Scott Dennis  
616-735-2900