



State of Michigan

Records Management Services



10 Steps to Good Records Management

Good recordkeeping helps agencies find the information that they need quickly and easily, and ensures that resources are used efficiently. There are many steps agencies can take to improve their recordkeeping practices.

Step 1: Supervisors are Responsible

Supervisors need to take responsibility for addressing records management. Employees need direction from their supervisor about their recordkeeping responsibilities. Consistent recordkeeping practices are important, so employees should not be making independent decisions about where records are kept and how they are organized. Promoting the regular maintenance of records will prevent the unnecessary and unorganized growth of records. It will also reduce operational costs and legal risk exposure, while improving productivity and employee morale. The [Records Management for Managers and Supervisors class and toolkit](#) will help managers and supervisors understand their records management responsibilities and take action.

Step 2: Records Management Training

Employees need training about records management and good recordkeeping if they are going to be effective. Managers and supervisors should assess their office's needs and consider assigning employees to take training that is applicable to their recordkeeping duties. [Records management training](#) is available online that covers a wide variety of topics, including organizing files, naming files, cleaning-up files, scanning, email management, and more. There are more than 20 online classes, and each class takes between 7-50 minutes to complete. There are also over 40 [guidance](#) documents available online about various recordkeeping topics. An [employee training plan template](#) can be used to track employee training assignments.

Step 3: Records Management Liaisons (RML)

Each department has a [Records Management Officer \(RMO\)](#) to coordinate their department's records management activities. Managers need to designate a Records Management Liaison (RML) for their division to work with the RMO. RMLs are responsible for coordinating retention schedule review projects with the subject matter experts within their division, coordinating the review of disposal notices for records stored at the Records Center and electronic document management services, distributing records management information to division employees (such as general schedule updates, new training information, etc. which is received from the RMO), and planning records clean-up projects to promote compliance with approved retention periods. Managers are encouraged to designate a RML who can fulfill these duties on behalf of the division. Questions about RMLs should be directed to the department's RMO.

Step 4: Review Retention and Disposal Schedules

[Retention and Disposal Schedules](#) list the records series created and maintained by an agency. They define the retention periods for records, and they authorize the destruction of records.

Unscheduled records are by default permanent because there is no authorization to destroy them. Schedules need to reflect current organization structures, business processes, and legal requirements of each agency, so the schedule is accurate and useful. Government agencies are frequently re-named, split, and merged, so it is important to revise schedules to reflect these changes. Agencies need to review their schedule to ensure the list of records is accurate and comprehensive, and to ensure retention periods meet agency's needs and can be implemented. Schedule revisions can be requested by contacting the [department's RMO](#) whenever they are necessary. Revisions are often fast and easy to address.

Step 5: Set Recordkeeping Expectations

Managers and supervisors need to set expectations about who is responsible for recordkeeping and how records will be managed. Managers and supervisors need to designate the [official recordkeeper\(s\)](#), identify where records will be stored (aka "system of record"), establish [recordkeeping rules](#) that promote consistency, and ensure compliance with records [Retention and Disposal Schedules](#).

Step 6: Designate the Official Recordkeeper(s)

Managers and supervisors who have not [designated an official recordkeeper](#) should analyze employee job responsibilities, workload, experience, skills, and other factors prior to assigning recordkeeping duties. Have a conversation with the group or team involved in a business process or activity to identify the designated recordkeeper(s). Create standard operating procedures to document the recordkeeping responsibilities. Communicate with employees who are assigned recordkeeping duties to ensure they understand what is expected. Ensure employees with recordkeeping responsibilities are properly trained and have appropriate resources to do the job.

Step 7: Designate Filing Systems

Records can be stored in a lot of places, but some storage locations are more appropriate for storing official records than others. Supervisors are responsible for designating the filing system that will be used for each business process or activity. When selecting a storage location, agencies should consider how accessible the location is to the people who need to use it, whether the location is capable of supporting the retention periods of the records, and how secure the location is, especially if the records contain confidential information. A [Tip Sheet for Electronic Storage Locations](#) is available online.

Step 8: Establish Recordkeeping Rules

Each designated filing system needs recordkeeping rules that address how the records are [organized](#), how to identify essential documents, establish [naming conventions](#), create check out/check in procedures, and reflect standard operating procedures for the business process. A [Tip Sheet: Recordkeeping Rules](#) and a [Tool: Filing Rules Template](#) are available online. They are designed to help agencies document their filing rules for the different types of records they maintain. Documenting the filing rules should promote consistent recordkeeping practices.

Step 9: Retention Schedule Compliance

Compliance with records [Retention and Disposal Schedules](#) reduces costs and legal liability. Answering the following questions will help agencies comply with approved schedules: Are the records listed on a schedule (general or specific)? Does the retention period meet the agency's business needs and legal obligations? Does the schedule match the organization chart? Does each employee know how long to keep records? Does the office clean up its records regularly? Which employee is responsible for maintaining the shared filing system? Are inactive paper records boxed for off-site storage at the Records Center? Are historical records transferred to the Archives of Michigan? Are confidential and sensitive paper records put in confidential destruction bins?

Step 10: Plan a Clean-up Day

The purpose of Snack It & Pack It Day is kick start a record clean-up, and to initiate a routine clean-up habit. Select the date and clear everyone's calendars of meetings for the day. Make sure everyone is working on clean-up day and not on leave. Distribute information to staff, including the [orientation presentation](#) and a [tip sheet](#). These can be used at a staff meeting about a month prior to the clean-up day to help employees plan ahead. Make sure staff clean-up both shared and individual storage locations, as well as physical and electronic storage locations.

These ten steps will help offices improve their recordkeeping practices. Please contact DTMB Records Management Services (RMS) for assistance with records retention, recordkeeping, and other records management issues.

Records Management Services

Email: recordscenter@michigan.gov

State Government: inside.michigan.gov/recordsmanagement

Local Government: www.michigan.gov/recordsmanagement