



State of Michigan

Records Management Services



Frequently Asked Questions

About Retention and Disposal Schedules (local government)

Q: What is a Retention and Disposal Schedule?

A: Retention and Disposal Schedules identify how long public records must be retained by an agency, and define the disposition method for the records. Retention periods are based on federal statutes and regulations, state and local requirements, and the agency's fiscal and administrative needs. General Schedules for local governments are available online. Local governments can contact Records Management Services at recordscenter@michigan.gov to request copies of approved agency-specific schedules.

Q: Why do I have to follow a Retention and Disposal Schedule?

A: According to Michigan law, public records cannot 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 individual.

Q: How are schedules developed?

A: Local governments submit proposed Retention and Disposal Schedules to Records Management Services for review and approval routing. Schedules are reviewed and approved by the creating agency, Records Management Services, Archives of Michigan, and the State Administrative Board.

Q: Who is responsible for records retention?

A: Every employee who creates, receives, or maintains public records is responsible for records retention. Government agencies need to identify the “office of record” when multiple offices possess copies of the same record. The “office of record” is responsible for following the retention period that is specified, duplicates do not need to be retained.

Q: What is a General Schedule?

A: General schedules cover records that are common to a particular government function, such as financial records. General schedules promote consistent retention practices, and they prevent individual agencies from needing to have an agency-specific schedule to cover the records. General schedules are available online.

Q: What is a non-record?

A: Not all recorded information is considered to be a record. Examples of non-records include extra copies of documents, drafts, courtesy copies, routing slips, publications received from outside sources, and other materials that are not essential to the operation of the agency. In accordance with General Schedule #1, non-records may be destroyed “as soon as they have served their intended purpose.”



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Q: Do schedules only apply to paper records?

A: No. Electronic records (email messages, databases, etc.) are considered public records, if they are created or received as part of performing a public employee's official duties. Electronic records must be evaluated for their content and purpose to determine the length of time they must be retained in accordance with the appropriate schedule.