

Records Management Introduction for State Employees

Requirements and Responsibilities

Wisconsin Public Records Board

Protecting legal, financial and historical interests of the state and local government in public records.

WHERE ARE PUBLIC RECORDS DEFINED?

- Wis. Stat. § 16.61(2)(b) defines “public records” for the purposes of records retention and disposition
- Wis. Stat. § 19.32(2) defines “records” for purposes of the records access and disclosure provisions of Wis. Stat. §§ 19.31-19.39 (known as the public records law or the open records law)

WHY PUBLIC RECORDS MANAGEMENT?

- Comply with applicable legal requirements
- Promote transparency in government
- Document governmental activities
- Fulfill obligations efficiently to the public
- Minimize legal risk
- Retrieve information faster
- Simplify decision making

WHAT ARE YOUR PUBLIC RECORDS RESPONSIBILITIES?

- Recognize and manage public records created as part of your job duties
- Protect and save public records you create and use
- File paper and electronic documents so they can be readily accessed (use agency file plan if applicable)
- Safeguard confidential and sensitive information
- Dispose of information that is not defined as a public record
- Retain public records for the appropriate length of time
- Dispose of public records in accordance with an approved Retention Disposition Authorization (RDA)
- Know where to go for help

WHAT PUBLIC RECORDS MIGHT YOU HAVE?

- Correspondence related to public business
- Program-related documentation
- Team, project, committee, or workgroup documentation
- Activity and project reports
- Training materials you have presented
- Work/information requests
- Operating procedures
- Calendars and schedules

For More Information: <http://publicrecordsboard.wi.gov> or Contact Your Agency Records Officer or Records Custodian

What is a Public Record?

Created in the course of public business

Examples: *correspondence and memos (paper and electronic), agreements, studies, reports*

Received for action

Examples: *Information or public records requests, tracked correspondence*

Mandated by statute or regulation

Examples: *statutorily required programs, administrative records, dockets, equal rights complaints*

What Qualities do Public Records Have?

Document government unit activities

Examples: *calendars, meeting minutes, project reports*

Support financial obligations or legal claims

Examples: *grants, contracts, litigation case files or audits*

Communicate agency requirements

Examples: *guidance documents, policies, procedures*

Where Might Public Records Occur?

*Note: **Information content** determines what constitutes a public record and not the format in which the information is generated.*

Email and voicemail

Text and instant messages

Social media

Websites

Audio and video recordings

Calendars

Documents

Spreadsheets and databases

Personal devices if used for government unit business

Maps and blueprints

What is a Retention/Disposition Schedule?

Records Disposition Authorizations (RDAs):

- Mandate **how long** public records are kept (retention)
- Group and describe related public records
- Mandate **what happens** to public records at the end of that time period (disposition)
- Are promulgated as policy via a [General Records Schedule \(GRS\)](#) or agency specific RDA

How Do I Manage My Public Records?

Policies

- Learn your government unit's records management policies
- Know which records disposition authorization (RDA) relates to your program records

Filing

- File public records to allow for easy access over time
- File records in accordance with your government unit's approved filing system to simplify retrieval

People

- Contact your Records Officer or designated Records Custodian with questions

Disposition

- Dispose of records according to approved RDA

*Note: Your government unit may **only** legally dispose of records as approved by an authorized records schedule*

What is Not a Public Record under Wis. Stat. § 16.61(2)(b)?

Reference materials and stock copies

Examples: *vendor catalogs, blank forms*

Copies

Examples: *copies of records (paper or electronic) for convenience or reference purposes only*

Draft or working papers

Examples: *draft documents without substantive comments, rough notes for personal use*

(It should be noted that some drafts are needed to support a decision trail or are otherwise required by an RDA)

Unsolicited email (internal or external)

Examples: *reminders received by all staff, listserv messages, spam*