



RECORDS MANAGEMENT ADVICE

Issued: June 2016

Basics of Records Management:

Determining Retention for Record Schedules

Purpose: Provide guidance to state government agencies on determining retention for their agency-specific record schedules. (*The state's General Schedules are used in conjunction with agency-specific schedules*).

According to 5 M.R.S.A. §95 all state government records must be covered by retention schedules. This includes records that never leave the custody of the creating agency. Retention schedules for digital records work the same way as for paper, microfilm, and other "traditional format" records. The most important principle to remember is this: **Content, not format, determines retention.**

To have the information available when you need it or when it is required, there must be a way to identify, manage and retain records for the right amount of time. When determining record retention for your agency material, check the *General Schedules* and *Agency-Specific Schedules* to confirm how long you need to keep certain records.

- **General Schedules** are issued by the Maine State Archives to provide retention and disposition standards for records common to several or all state agencies. The Records Management Division works to provide standards, procedures, and techniques to facilitate and ensure effective management of state government records including proper maintenance, storage and final disposition. One way we help to do this is through the General Schedules.
- **Agency-Specific Schedules** are those created to accommodate unique programs or activities within your agency, or for records that require longer retention periods than specified in the General Schedules due to statute and/or mandates. Agency-Specific Schedules should be reviewed annually and updated as necessary by your Records Officer. Any schedules and amendments must be approved by the Maine State Archives. Establishing recordkeeping requirements helps ensure that you create and maintain adequate and proper documentation of program activities. Some recordkeeping requirements come from legislation, while some are less well-defined.

Records are managed by both General and Agency-Specific Schedules, which document how long to keep specific types of records and what should happen to them. Schedules provide the guidance necessary to prevent unneeded records from cluttering agency offices and help preserve mid- to long-term records until they have served their purpose. ***Before an agency schedule is created, be sure a General Schedule does not already exist.***

Additional advice on determining retention of record schedules is available at
<http://www.maine.gov/sos/arc/records/state/statetraining.html>