

## Administrative Policy No. 05.04

**Subject:** Records Retention

**Information Contact:** Agency Records Officer  
Office of Information Governance  
Office of the Secretary

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**Authorizing Source:** [Title 40 RCW](#)  
[Chapter 42.56 RCW](#)  
[Chapter 434-610 WAC](#)  
[Chapter 434-615 WAC.](#)  
[Chapters 434-635 through 434-690 WAC](#)  
[Chapter 434-663 WAC](#)  
[Requirements for the Destruction of Non-Archival Paper Records after Imaging \(Washington State Archives\)](#)

**Effective Date:** July 6, 2007

**Revised:** November 1, 2022

**Approved by:** **Original signed by Michael Williams**  
Interim Senior Director, Office of Justice and Civil Rights

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### Purpose

This policy establishes requirements and guidelines for implementing the records retention program in the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). Key elements include:

1. Methods for following state records management, destruction, and retention requirements.
2. The role of DSHS Forms and Records Management Services (FRMS) in the records management process.
3. The roles and responsibilities of DSHS employees in the records retention process.

### Scope

This policy applies to all DSHS employees.

## Definitions

**Disposition:** To change the custody, location, or nature of DSHS records including transfer, microfilming, duplication, destruction, or deletion.

**Division of Archives and Records Management:** A division within the Office of the Secretary of State that sets statewide policy for records management, disaster records recovery, records preservation, and historical records management.

**DSHS Records:** Any document or recorded information regardless of physical form or characteristics created, sent, organized or received by the agency in the course of public business including paper documents, e-mail, drawings, graphs, charts, video tapes, photographs, phone records, voice recordings including from meetings on Microsoft O365 Teams, WebEx, Zoom, and similar platforms, data compilations, planners, calendars, diaries, draft documents, electronically stored information (ESI), and metadata.

**Agency Records Officer:** The person responsible for the agency records management and retention program per [RCW 40.14.040](#).

**Digital Archives:** The section of the Division of Archives and Records Management in which electronic records possessing enduring legal or historic value, or both, are retained permanently and, per RCW 40.14.030, must not be destroyed.

**Electronically Stored Information (ESI):** DSHS records stored in an electronic format. Email is one type of ESI. Other types of ESI may include records created using programs such as: Microsoft Office 365 Teams, eDiscovery, Word, Excel, Access, Publisher, PowerPoint, SharePoint, Outlook, video recordings, Adobe Acrobat, SMS text other instant messaging, and web-based social media including but not limited to, blogs and micro-blogs (such as Twitter), social networks (such as Facebook), and video sharing (such as YouTube). ESI can be located in databases and on network servers, backup tapes, mobile devices, thumb or flash drives, compact disks (CD), digital video disks (DVD), floppy disks, work computers, cell phones, laptops computers, tablets, or any other electronic storage device used to do DSHS work. ESI also includes any DSHS records that employees store on personally owned electronic devices used to do DSHS work, such as home computers, laptops, cell phones, or other mobile devices. *Note: [Information Security Standards Manual](#), Section 2.8.3, DSHS information must not be downloaded to, saved to, or stored on non-DSHS administered IT resources, i.e., computers, devices, or removable media, even temporarily, except under a contract as described in [Information Security Standards Manual](#) Section 5.13 External Hosting.*

**Employee Transition:** Formally transitioning a DSHS employee because of the employee's position transfer within DSHS or resignation, termination, or retirement from DSHS.

**Essential Records:** DSHS records vital in an emergency and necessary for the reestablishment of normal operations after any emergency. This includes all records needed to protect assets, obligations, and resources necessary to provide continuity, preservation, and operation of the agency.

**Imaging:** Converting paper documents into digital documents. *Please note: Approval is required to destroy paper documents per [Chapter 434-663 WAC](#).*

**Metadata:** Data about data. Software programs automatically create metadata about the history, tracking, or use of an electronic record. Different types and elements of metadata are available for different types of records. Metadata may include how, when, and by whom a record was created, received, accessed, changed, how it is formatted, and where it is located. Examples of metadata include but are not limited to: document properties; hidden rows, cells and formulas in Microsoft Excel; track changes, comments, and markups in Microsoft Word; and blind carbon copy (bcc) in e-mail. Some types of metadata are visible, such as file size and date of creation, but many other elements of metadata are not visible or are embedded in the record. Printing an electronic record typically does not reproduce all elements of metadata.

**Onsite Records Destruction:** The destruction of DSHS records at the location where the records were created or used.

**Personal Devices:** Any devices (for example, laptop, tablet, or smartphone) not owned by a government agency for the express purpose of conducting agency business.

**Public Records Requests (PRR):** The process to seek access to public records, including client records, held by the department unless covered by other law. See [Chapter 42.56 RCW](#) and [Administrative Policy 05.02](#).

**Records Coordinator:** The person appointed by administration or division management to assist the agency records officer with the records management and retention duties of their administration or division.

**Records Inventory:** A descriptive listing or survey of record series held by an office that includes title, types of files in the series, and a description of significant subject content.

**Records Retention:** The minimum amount of time required for the retention of DSHS records according to program needs and requirements approved by the State Records Committee.

**Records Retention Schedule:** A State Records Committee approved list of records that establishes legal records retention and disposition requirements pursuant to [RCW 40.14.060](#) and includes both the [State General Records Retention Schedule](#) and [unique DSHS Records Retention Schedules](#).

- The State General Records Retention Schedule contains administrative, fiscal, legal, and personnel records common to and used by many state agencies.
- The unique DSHS Retention Schedule contains agency-specific records retention schedules that are unique to DSHS.

**Records Transmittals:** An electronic process that lists and describes the records contained in boxes sent to the State Records Center.

**Source Records:** Records in which data collected is first recorded.

**State Archives:** The section of the Division of Archives and Records Management in which records possessing either enduring legal or historic value, or both, are retained permanently and, per RCW 40.14.030, must not be destroyed.

**State Records Center:** The section of Division of Archives and Records Management that provides secure storage for paper records which must be available for administrative, audit, legal, or fiscal reasons for a specified period.

**State Records Committee:** The committee that approves, modifies, or disapproves state agency recommendations on retention schedules for public records per [RCW 40.14.050](#).

## Policy

The law requires DSHS and its employees to keep DSHS records for a specific period under approved record retention schedules. Failure to keep records under the approved record retention schedules, or failure to stop destruction of records when there is [notice of potential lawsuit, or an active lawsuit](#), audit, or public records request, could subject the employee and DSHS to a combination of one or more of the following: penalties, fines, and/or disciplinary action.

1. The agency records officer must:
  - a. Implement records management and retention requirements from the Division of Archives and Records Management.

- b. Work with the State Records Committee to produce and revise unique DSHS Records Retention Schedules.
  - c. Review and approve record transmittals for accuracy prior to submitting to State Records Center for processing.
  - d. Assist agency staff transfer archival records to State Archives.
  - e. Assist agency staff transfer archival electronic records to Digital Archives.
  - f. Review established record schedules biennially to maintain complete and accurate information.
  - g. Review process on record disposal procedures, including onsite records destruction, to maintain cost efficiency and timeliness of disposal. See Attachment A.
  - h. Assist records coordinators with records disaster preparedness and recovery plans to include annual review of essential records.
  - i. Assist records coordinators to implement employee transition processes.
  - j. Conduct agency-wide records inventories.
  - k. Monitor and approve disposition for all DSHS records submitted to the State Records Center.
  - l. Approve destruction of paper-based source records after they have been converted to a digital format by imaging (scanning) per [Chapter 434-663 WAC](#).  
*Please note: Imaged records become the official document once an imaging approval is obtained through the agency records officer.*
  - m. Provide guidelines for on-site records destruction under Division of Archives and Records Management requirements.
  - n. Provide quality training and consultation to Records Coordinators and department staff regarding state records management, destruction, and retention requirements.
  - o. Perform other records management duties as assigned.
2. Forms and Records Management Services (FRMS) must assist the agency records officer by posting approved, current record retention schedules on the [DSHS Records Retention Intranet](#) and the [DSHS Records Retention Internet](#) websites.
  3. Division directors or their designees must:
    - a. Require division employees to comply with procedures established by the agency records officer, Division of Archives and Records Management, and State Records Committee.
    - b. Appoint an employee as records coordinator and notify the agency records officer in writing.
    - c. Require division employees to be trained and knowledgeable regarding both the General Records Retention Schedule and unique DSHS Record Retention

Schedules, and disposal requirements that apply to the DSHS records they generate and use.

- d. Require that disposition of DSHS records within their division is conducted according to timelines in the General Records Retention Schedule and DSHS Record Retention Schedules unless there is notice of a potential lawsuit, or there is an active lawsuit, audit, or public records request. See Attachment A.
  - e. Require supervisors, managers, or designees to assist records coordinators implement a process for transitioning employee records to included review and transition of these records to another employee or the State Records Center.
4. Records Coordinators must:
- a. Comply with procedures established by the agency records officer, Division of Archives and Records Management, and the State Records Committee.
  - b. Consult with the agency records officer on matters relating to the maintenance, retention, transfer, and/or destruction of public records in accordance with [RCW 40.14.040](#).
  - c. Assist the agency records officer with records inventories.
  - d. Review their unique DSHS Record Retention Schedules annually and forward revisions to the agency records officer.
  - e. Identify essential record series, establish office procedures for their preservation and protection, and forward a list to the agency records officer.
  - f. Establish procedures for compliance with the General Records Retention Schedule and unique DSHS Records Retention Schedules record retention schedules including regular or periodic records disposition.
  - g. Establish procedures for onsite records destruction per minimum requirements as stated in Attachment A.
  - h. Secure approval for disposition of DSHS records not listed on a retention schedule.
  - i. Provide consultation and assistance to administrative staff on records retention compliance requirements.
  - j. Assist program supervisors or managers to implement a process for employees transitioning within DSHS or separating from DSHS to review their records and transition employee records to another employee or the State Records Center.
  - k. Perform other records management duties as assigned.
5. All DSHS employees must:
- a. Take [DSHS Records Management](#) mandatory training annually available in the Learning Center.

- b. Consult with the program records coordinator on matters relating to their programs records retention policies to ensure retention compliance pursuant to [RCW 40.14.060](#).
- c. Comply with retention procedures established by this policy, division policies, the agency records officer, Division of Archives and Records Management, and the State Records Committee.
- d. Follow the [Information Security Standards Manual Section 2.8 Connection to DSHS Network of Non-DSHS Administered IT Resources](#) regarding the use of personal devices for storing records.
- e. Keep DSHS records the employee is responsible for until the records have met the end of their approved retention period or have been imaged in accordance with the [Requirements for the Destruction of Non-Archival Paper Records after Imaging](#).
- f. Keep ESI in its original electronic format with metadata intact. (Printing and keeping a hard copy of ESI is not a substitute for the electronic version unless specifically approved by the State Records Committee.)
- g. Keep any DSHS records created, sent, organized, received, or stored on DSHS or non-DSHS resources according to the retention schedule regardless of physical location.
- h. Prior to the destruction of any DSHS records, determine if those records need to be kept for a public records request, lawsuit, audit, or program requirement.
- i. Follow established procedures for onsite records destruction. See Attachment A.
- j. Obtain approval from the Agency Records Officer before disposing of DSHS records not listed on a retention schedule.
- k. Review their files upon leaving their administration or DSHS, and forward active files to their successor or, if none, to their manager or supervisor to assign to another worker. Send inactive files with remaining retention to the State Records Center or delete files with no remaining retention unless on litigation, anticipated litigation, public records request, audit, or program hold.
- l. Perform other records management duties as assigned.

**Resource**

[DSHS Records Retention Intranet Website](#)

Attachment A: Onsite Destruction Log

- A. [DSHS 01-089, Onsite Records Destruction](#), is a form available to use to log onsite records destruction. Each administration may determine whether to use the DSHS 01-089, logbooks, or electronic logs, etc., as long as a method to log onsite records destruction is used.
- B. In the event of a legal or audit challenge, an onsite destruction log provides crucial evidence of “defensible disposition,” demonstrating that the agency was aware of and compliant with current records retention requirements *at the time that the records were destroyed*.
- C. The log should document the destruction of **electronic** records (emails, digital / video recordings, social media posts, etc.) as well as **paper** records (including books, photos / slides, microfilm, etc.) which have retention value per the State General Records Retention Schedule and unique DSHS records retention schedule.
- D. At a minimum, the log should include:
  - Disposition Authority Number (DAN) of the record series being destroyed;
  - Title / name of the record series;
  - Date range of the records being destroyed (start date to end date); and,
  - Date of destruction; and,
  - Signatures from the person creating the destruction log and the person authorizing the destruction.
- E. Retain onsite records destruction logs for the life of the agency per State Government General Records Retention Schedule series GS 11005, Destruction of Public Records.
- F. Information on appropriate destruction methods for paper and electronic records, as well as sample destruction logs (which state and local government agencies may use and adapt for their own use) are available from Washington State Archives at:  
<https://www.sos.wa.gov/archives/RecordsManagement/How-to-Destroy-Non-Archival-Records.aspx>.