

Retention and Disposition of Records: How Long to Keep Records and How to Destroy Them

by Geof Huth

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Introduction

You must regularly destroy unnecessary records if you want to do your work as efficiently as possible. Many people don't learn this lesson until they've spent a month clearing obsolete records out of a storage room. It's a lesson that others have learned when they found themselves unable to respond to legal subpoenas or discovery actions. But you can avoid learning this lesson the hard way by finding out how to use records retention schedules to simplify the disposition of your records.

The fundamental element of any records management program is managing the disposition of records, thus improving access and efficiency. You should see these improvements when dealing with paper records, as well as with electronic records and records on microfilm. The State Archives develops general retention schedules for state agencies and local governments. This publication will help you understand how to use these retention schedules, how to develop specialized office retention schedules for your own use, and how to destroy obsolete records.

Explaining Retention Schedules

Introduction

A records retention schedule is more formally called a "records retention and disposition schedule" because it is a list that provides both the minimum retention period and the final disposition for an organization's records. A retention schedule indicates the *shortest* amount of time you are required to retain any record; it does not require you to destroy records at that time. Some local governments and state agencies decide to keep some of their records longer than required. Although this is acceptable, you should document any divergence from the schedule, since random undocumented divergence may expose your organization to legal risks.

Retention periods listed in the schedules apply to the information contained in records regardless of the recording medium: paper, microfilm, electronic, etc. Whatever the medium, you must retain records for the length of time specified by the appropriate retention schedule, and you must ensure that the records are accessible for the full retention period. You have not met the retention requirement, for example, if your organization does not have the hardware and software needed to read an electronic record that you have carefully saved on a now-obsolete diskette.

Occasionally, people believe that a retention schedule has certain functions that it really does not have. For example, a retention schedule does not indicate how long to retain non-records (such as blank forms or outside publications), it does not tell you how to destroy records, and it does not identify confidential or restricted records. The Committee on Open Government handles the issue of confidentiality of records. For information on this topic, contact the Committee on Open

Government, Department of State, One Commerce Plaza, 99 Washington Avenue, Suite 650, Albany, NY 12231-0001; telephone, (518) 474-2518; fax, (518) 474-1927; e-mail, opengov@dos.state.ny.us; web, <http://www.dos.state.ny.us/coogl>.

Another common misconception is that a retention schedule lists all the records your organization must create. Each general retention schedule produced by the State Archives lists hundreds of records, but no local government or state agency will have every record listed in one of these schedules. If your organization does not normally create a particular record, the presence of that item on a schedule does not mean that your organization must create it. All that this means is that if at some point you create such a record, then you must retain it for the listed period.

Why Use Retention Schedules?

The purpose of a records retention and disposition schedule is to ensure that records are retained as long as they are needed for administrative, fiscal, legal, or research purposes. The State Archives determines minimum retention periods by carefully studying and analyzing records to determine their potential value for these purposes. State laws require the use of retention schedules to dispose of records. Without a schedule in place, you have no legal authority to dispose of records. There are several interrelated advantages to using retention schedules:

- Discard promptly records you no longer need
- Improve retrieval of records by reducing their bulk
- Reduce staff time needed to access records
- Save money by reducing storage costs
- Save space by freeing up filing cabinets and storage areas
- Identify and, therefore, preserve permanent records

How the State Archives Creates Retention Schedules

For State Agencies

Executive branch agencies may not destroy or otherwise dispose of any records unless such disposition is authorized by the State Archives, acting on behalf of the Commissioner of Education and in cooperation with the State Comptroller and the Attorney General. The State Archives produces a *General Retention and Disposition Schedule for New York State Government Records* that covers many common administrative, fiscal, and personnel records in state agencies. You may use the *General Schedule* to dispose of records as long as your agency's records management officer (RMO) first notifies the State Archives in writing of the intent to use the schedule. Agencies may discontinue using the schedule at any time, but the RMO should notify the State Archives if this occurs.

The bulk of records in the custody of a state agency, however, are often unique to that agency. To set retention periods for these records, you should contact the State Archives at (518) 474-6926 to begin the process of developing Records Disposition Authorizations (RDAs) for each records series. In this process, your agency and the Archives work together to collect information

about the records you maintain in order to identify appropriate retention periods. The Archives ensures that the retention periods in these authorizations meet any legal, fiscal or continuing research requirements, and your agency works with the Archives to ensure these meet all of your administrative needs.

For Local Governments

The State Archives develops local government schedules on behalf of large groups of local governments (all schools and BOCES, all municipalities, all counties, etc.). First, the Archives assembles information on applicable laws and regulations, audit requirements, the need for legal evidence, administrative needs, and historical or research value. The Archives then drafts schedule items describing the information in the records and proposing retention periods. These proposed retentions are then reviewed by local government and state agency officials, the Local Government Records Advisory Council, local government associations, archivists and records managers in other states, historians, state agency personnel and state agency counsels.

The Archives then files the schedule with the Department of State, which publishes a summary in the New York State Register. Ultimately, the Board of Regents reviews the schedules and adopts it as regulation. After final approval, the Archives mails copies of the schedule to the records management officers of the appropriate local governments. The State Archives produces four different schedules for different types of governments. See Appendix A, "Retention Schedules Produced by the State Archives " to see which schedule your organization should use.

How to Use Retention Schedules

Because each general retention schedule covers the records of hundreds of local governments or all state agencies, the State Archives writes these schedules to make them pertinent to a large number of sometimes diverse organizations. Because of the general nature of these schedules, you may need practice to use them efficiently.

Using the State Archives' local government schedules and the *General Schedule* for state agencies is fairly easy if you follow the steps below. You will rarely need to follow all the steps to figure out a record's retention, but the first few steps are required.

1. Adopt the schedule

The adoption of a State Archives general retention schedule documents your organization's retention policy and is the necessary first step toward using one of these schedules.

Before using a schedule to discard any records, the governing body of a local government must adopt it by resolution. Local governments need to adopt a schedule only once. There is no need to re-adopt the schedule after each revision.

Similarly, state agencies must adopt the *General Schedule* if they wish to follow it. However, state agencies will have many records not covered by the *General Schedule*, so they must also work with the State Archives to develop their own agency-specific schedules.

2. Identify the record series

Before you can determine the appropriate retention period for any records, you must first identify the records series. Since you will usually be familiar with the records, this step is often the easiest. First, make sure you are dealing with a true series, not merely a group of unrelated records. A records series is a group of records that is normally filed and managed as one unit: for example, meeting minutes, purchase orders or correspondence files. Second, talk with someone who uses the records on a daily basis to try to determine the purpose of the record. Knowing the purpose of the records will help you identify a possible title for the records series.

3. Determine if you have the official copy

When using a schedule, you should determine whether you are dealing with the official copy of a record or a secondary or duplicate copy. Your organization should designate one copy of each records series as the official copy. The schedule's retention periods apply only to official copies of records. All other copies are merely duplicates, and you may dispose of those whenever you no longer need them.

4. Check the index

Each State Archives retention schedule contains an index. However, the indexes to different retention schedules have various levels of detail, so these will not always direct you to the schedule item you need. When using the index, first search for the term that most accurately summarizes the records series. For instance, if you were looking up canceled checks, "checks" is the most obvious term to use. If that does not provide you with the answer you need, try to think creatively of synonymous or related terms that may also be appropriate. In the case of canceled checks, then, you might have to search under "fiscal" to find the item you're looking for.

5. Check the schedule's functional headings

Before using a State Archives schedule, take time to read the introduction and become familiar with the functional headings in the schedule. The schedules arrange records series in sections under headings that reflect their function (such as "Fiscal"). The schedules do not generally identify individual documents or specific forms; instead, they describe the purpose or function of the series. If a records series' content and function are substantially the same as an item described in the schedule, you should consider the series covered by that item.

6. Check the "General" and "Miscellaneous" sections

Each State Archives schedule for local governments has a "General" section that covers those records common to many departments in a government (such as correspondence, general reports and minutes), so be sure to check this section if you cannot find the records series under a more specific functional heading. Always resorting to the "General" section, however, will be a mistake, since you must find the schedule item that most closely matches your records. For example, the "General" section includes an item covering "annual reports," but there may be a

more precise item under a functional heading that better covers a particular series of annual reports.

Each local government schedule also contains a "Miscellaneous" section for records that do not fit under any other heading. Remember to check this section as a last resort. Note, however, that the *General Schedule* used by state agencies does not have a "General" or "Miscellaneous" section.

7. Search for keywords in an electronic version of the schedule

Sometimes, the easiest way to find a specific item in a retention schedule is to open an electronic version of the schedule with your word processing program and search for specific keywords. If you do this, remember that the retention schedule might not use the same words that you use to describe a certain function, so search for likely synonyms as well. The *General Schedule* for state agencies and all local government retention schedules are available for download from the State Archives' website at www.archives.nysed.gov.

8. Call your Regional Advisory Officer (RAO)

If you cannot find the appropriate retention period you need on your own, call the appropriate State Archives' Regional Advisory Officer for help. RAOs deal with a large number of retention questions in the course of their work and can usually answer your questions immediately.

9. If the Regional Advisory Officers cannot find the retention, they call the State Archives in Albany

Occasionally, RAOs will need to call Albany staff to discuss the situation and clarify any questions that remain with staff in Albany who actually produce the schedules. After discussing the issue together, staff usually identify the appropriate retention period for a particular records series.

10. If the State Archives doesn't find a retention period for the records, the Archives must schedule that series

Sometimes, the State Archives has not yet scheduled the record series you are considering, so your call to the Archives might actually initiate that process. Until there is an item in the appropriate schedule covering this series, you must retain it. For state agencies, if a series is not on either the *General Schedule* or your agency-specific schedule, you can add it to your own schedule, working in concert with the State Archives.

Using Agency-Specific Schedules

State agencies must work with the State Archives to develop agency-specific schedules for those records unique to their agencies or other records that are not included in the *General Schedule*. In this process, the state agency develops a Records Disposition Request (RDR) describing each records series and suggesting and justifying a retention period. The State Archives, the Attorney

General's office and the Office of the State Comptroller review proposed disposition schedules to ensure the proposed dispositions meet legal, fiscal, administrative, research and other retention needs. The State Archives then approves a completed Records Disposition Authorization (RDA).

State agencies retain copies of these RDAs and can use them much like office retention schedules to look up retention periods for specific records series. Keep in mind, however, that over time the common title of a series may change, so be sure to look for any series under all possible titles. Agency staff may also forget about the RDAs and not realize which of their records are authorized for disposition. Over long periods of time, agencies may also neglect to use approved RDAs, causing obsolete records to accumulate even though they are authorized for disposition. Finally, since the nature, contents or use of a series may change over time, the approved disposition plan may no longer be appropriate. To safeguard against these problems, the State Archives recommends that agencies periodically review their RDAs to ensure they provide appropriate disposition guidance and that staff are using them.

Exceptions to the Schedules

Although in general you can follow the guidelines of a State Archives retention schedule without question, there are a few situations that will force you to suspend implementation of the schedule.

Organizational preference

Certain situations within your organization may create the need for retention periods that exceed the minimums listed in a State Archives schedule. Examples include stringent internal audit requirements, use of records to conduct research, or use of records for ongoing investigations. You are not required to destroy records at the end of the retention period or to inform the Archives if you intend to keep records longer. However, if you plan to retain records longer than the minimum retention period as a regular business practice, you should document this intent in written internal procedures. This will provide documentation of normal practice for Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests or for legal actions such as discovery motions. For state agencies, you may submit separate Records Disposition Requests (RDRs) for those series that you wish to retain longer than the retention periods specified in the General Schedule, but you are not required to do so.

Records created before 1910

Local governments need written approval from the State Archives, acting on behalf of the Commissioner of Education, to dispose of records created before 1910, regardless of the retention period listed in a State Archives retention schedule. Often these records have continuing historical or research value because of the following conditions:

- No other documentation exists.
- They contain more detailed and historically significant information than more recent records.
- They have intrinsic value, which means the records are important to keep in their original form.

To dispose of records created before 1910, local governments must submit a completed disposition request form to the State Archives for review. See Appendix E, "Request from Local Governments for Approval to Dispose of Records Created Before 1910," which contains a copy of the form and instructions for submitting it to the Archives.

Records with unique historical value

The State Archives' *local government* schedules take into account the general historical value of records. The type and detail of information in your records may demand that you keep them permanently, even though they have a shorter retention period. If you believe some of your *local government's* records have unique historical value, contact the Regional Advisory Officer in your region or the State Archives' Records Advisory Services for information on how to conduct an appraisal of these records. For more information on archival appraisal, see State Archives Technical Information Series # 50, *Appraisal of Local Government Records for Historical Value*.

During legal proceedings

To comply with current or pending legal actions, you may need to retain some records beyond their scheduled retention periods. You must keep any records used in such actions for at least the duration of the action, even if the records' retention periods have passed. Legal actions may include subpoenas and notices of claim (the first indication of a pending filing of a lawsuit). If the retention period has not expired, you must retain the records for the remainder of the retention period. If the retention period has expired by the time the legal action ends, *local governments* must keep the records for one additional year to resolve any need for the records in an appeal. However, there is no such requirement for *state agencies*.

When there are outstanding Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests

If records that are the subject of a FOIL request exist at the time of the request, then you must not destroy the records until after you respond to the request. If you deny the request, you should not destroy the records until after any potential appeal is made and resolved.

If waiting for a pending audit or other review

You must retain any pertinent records if you know there is a pending state or federal audit that will involve those records. However, if there is no requirement that an audit be done of certain records and if you have not been told of an impending audit, then you may discard any of the applicable records once they have reached the end of their retention periods. Review by another organization, such as for accreditation review, may also require you to retain records beyond their retention period.

If the records are microfilmed

If you have properly microfilmed any *local government* records and have verified the accuracy of their contents, then you may designate the microfilm as the record copy and discard the paper or electronic files. However, you will still need permission from the State Archives to dispose of

any original records created before 1910. Although *state agencies* may designate microfilm copies as the record copy and treat copies in other media as secondary copies, state agencies require a revised Records Disposition Authorization (RDA) in their agency-specific schedule to dispose of the paper records after filming.

If records are not yet listed in a retention schedule

Keep in mind that you cannot dispose of any records unless they are listed in a retention schedule. If you believe you have records that are not scheduled, contact the State Archives for help. The Archives will first verify that the records are not covered by any retention item before beginning the process of identifying the retention period. *Local governments* must keep these records until an item is added to the appropriate local government schedule. *State agencies* can work with the Archives to add the necessary new items to their agency-specific schedules.

Local Government Records Not Covered in State Archives' Schedules

Some records are not regulated by the Commissioner of Education and thus will not appear in the State Archives' local government retention schedules. Below is a list of records not found in these schedules. Contact the appropriate agency for more information.

Cancelled Obligations

Office of the State Comptroller
Division of Legal Services
110 State Street
Albany, NY 12236
(518) 474-5586

Refer also to Appendix D: Destruction of Cancelled Obligations

Court Records

Records Office
Office of Court Administration
25 Beaver Street, 8th floor
New York, NY 10004
(212) 428-2877

Records of County District Attorneys

Clerk of the appropriate Judicial District
Appellate Division of the State Supreme Court

Birth, Death and Marriage Records (1881–present)

Although these records are not listed on the State Archives' local government schedules, the Department of Health has developed a schedule (approved by the Archives) for use by local governments. Contact the State Archives for more information.

Motor Vehicle Records

Records Officer
New York State Department of Motor Vehicles
Swan Street Building
Empire State Plaza
Albany, NY 12228
(518) 474-2381

Other State Records

Contact either the appropriate agency or the State Archives.

Records of the City of New York

New York City Department of Records and Information Services
31 Chambers Street
New York, NY 10007
(212) 788-8580

Records of Municipal Housing Authorities

Housing Management Bureau
New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal
25 Beaver Street
New York, NY 10004
(212) 480-7242

Note: Section 59 of the Public Housing Law exempts housing authorities from State Archives' jurisdiction for records disposition. The Division of Housing and Community Renewal must approve the disposition of records relating to the operation of state-financed programs. For all other records, housing authorities may establish their own records disposition policies, except for minutes of the housing authority (including appendices and attachments) and copies of annual reports submitted to the Division of Housing and Community Renewal. Housing authorities must retain these records permanently. All records disposition decisions must also meet any applicable records retention requirements of federal and state agencies, including the Office of the State Comptroller.

Records of the Utica Transportation Authority

Note: Section 68 of Transportation Law exempts the Authority from the State Archives' jurisdiction for records disposition. See that law for special requirements for the disposition of Authority records.

State Agency Records Not Covered by the State Archives General Schedule

The State Archives' *General Retention and Disposition Schedule for New York State Government Records* is not intended to cover all the records that a state agency has in its possession. Records not covered by the *General Schedule* include

- **Records unique to a single agency**
State agencies need to work with the State Archives to produce detailed Records Disposition Authorizations (RDAs) for records unique to their agencies.
- **Records created or maintained by control and service agencies**
The *General Schedule* does not cover records used to carry out or document government-wide approval, control, audit, or oversight responsibilities, or records used to provide centralized services to other agencies.
- **Original records that are microfilmed or digitally scanned**
If you want to retain records on microfilm or as digital images in place of the originals, your agency's records management officer must submit a separate Records Disposition Request (RDR) to the State Archives before destroying the original records.
- **Records subject to specific increased federal requirements**
Agencies must make certain that the retention periods in the *General Schedule* meet applicable retention requirements for any programs subject to federal audits or oversight. If some records require longer retention periods to meet federal requirements, you must submit separate Records Disposition Requests (RDRs) for those.

Records Disposition Made Easy

The most difficult aspect of records retention and disposition isn't determining how long to keep certain records, but rather disposing of unneeded records regularly to avoid developing a backlog. To make discarding records easier, try following these simple suggestions.

Make sure you're familiar with your retention schedule

You don't need to be an expert on the retention periods for all the records you have. But knowing how to find a retention period will make you more likely to follow it. If you think of the retention schedule as a strange, incomprehensible document, you'll ensure that you won't get around to discarding records.

Set aside time for records disposition

You are busy. Everyone you work with is busy, and this is the main reason people don't get around to discarding obsolete records. A good way to remind yourself to take care of disposition is to periodically set aside part of a day to dispose of all obsolete records. Try to get your whole organization to do it at once so that everyone works on disposition together. Evaluate your annual work schedule, identify your slower periods, and schedule a disposition day.

Keep disposition in mind when you set up files

Often when you create and file records (whether paper or electronic), you don't consider how or when you will discard the records. You consider only how much you need the records right now.

For instance, many organizations sensibly remove personnel folders from filing cabinets once these files become inactive. But the permanent record card, which summarizes an employee's entire work history, is usually the only permanent record in each file. So you could pull out the

permanent record cards and store these separate from the other records, and you can then discard the remaining records six years after the employee leaves.

Another example: If you maintain subject files with diverse retention requirements, mark the dates of disposition (or at least the dates of the contents) directly on the folders. This will allow you to scan the files quickly to determine retention periods. Taking time at the outset to consider how to make disposition easier later on will ultimately save you time.

Set up office retention schedules

Putting together such a schedule can be time-consuming, so many people avoid doing it. Once everyone in your organization has a list of all the retention periods for all the records in their office, then records disposition will be as easy as looking up dates on a sheet of paper or in a database.

List dates of disposition on boxes of inactive records

This is the simplest solution, but some people don't do it. If you add the date you can throw the box away to a box label, this simplifies the process of identifying obsolete records. If you don't do this and have no other way of identifying obsolete records, then you have to go through the time-consuming process of examining the contents of each box whenever you want to determine if you can discard them.

Consider the consequences

If you don't make the disposition of obsolete records a routine task in your office, you will probably waste hours of staff time searching through unmarked boxes of records and unorganized electronic files just to find a single record. Making disposition routine will always be the more efficient way to eliminate obsolete records.

Office Retention Schedules

Introduction

The State Archives' general schedules are broad documents, applicable to many different organizations. Because of this, these schedules are sometimes not easy to use, especially for people who do not work with records retention as a regular part of their job. By using the retention periods in State Archives' schedules as a guide, you can prepare your own detailed office schedules to guide retention, transfer and disposition of records. Office schedules have the following features:

- **Shorter than State Archives schedules**
Office retention schedules list only those records each office actually maintains, so every item on the schedule is pertinent to the particular office. Because the schedules are shorter, they are easier to use.

- **Can include longer retention periods**
State Archives schedules show only the legal minimum retention periods, but you can use office schedules to document any increased retentions your organization has decided to follow. In this way, your office retention schedule can become official documentation that you're keeping records longer. This documentation may be important if your organization is involved in legal actions where you need to prove you are following these retention periods in the normal course of business.
- **Identify records series by common names**
An office retention schedule can identify your records series by the names commonly used in your office, instead of the sometimes unfamiliar titles used in State Archives schedules.
- **Indicate retention within the office and other useful information**
One of the most important benefits of an office retention schedule is that it indicates when to transfer records from active office space to inactive storage. Office schedules can also include notes on methods of destruction, weeding, confidentiality of record series, and transfer procedures.
- **Can serve as list of records for FOIL**
New York's Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requires government agencies to maintain a "subject matter list" of all its records for use by the public. Although many local governments use one of the general schedules as this subject matter list, an office retention schedule would provide a much more exact catalog of the records held by your organization.

A word of warning: Be careful not to make office schedules more complicated than necessary. Small organizations might have a single sheet for each work unit, listing only the office retention and total retention periods. Larger organizations, on the other hand, may need more complicated schedules that add such information as retention in semi-active storage (temporary vault or file room storage), comments on records appraisal and weeding, or notes on the type of destruction for each records series. Remember that your goal is to make a useful office schedule that you and your co-workers will actually use.

Elements of Office Retention Schedules

Office retention schedules may contain much information, including information not in the retention schedules developed by the State Archives. See Appendix B, "Sample Office Retention Schedules," for examples of how others have designed their office schedules. Some particular types of information in an office schedule can include

- **Department and unit**
Most printed versions of office retention schedules are arranged by the departments and units of the local government or the offices and units of the state agency. In this way, each unit of the organization has only that part of the office schedule it needs.

- **Records series title**
For the office retention schedule to work, it must first identify the record series. Keep in mind that you also have the option of using the common title used in your office as the records series title.
- **Format of records**
It is often useful to include a brief description of the format of the records. For example, you may decide that the electronic version of your minutes needs to be kept for only a few years, even though you'll maintain the paper copy forever.
- **Office retention period (active)**
A true office schedule must identify the in-office retention period. This helps you easily identify when to move records out of the office.
- **Intermediate retention period (semi-active)**
This level of detail will not be necessary in most offices. However, some offices maintain a central filing room that serves as semi-active storage for those records not quite active enough to keep in the office but not inactive enough to move to inactive storage.
- **Total retention period**
Most office retention schedules also include the total retention for each records series.
- **State Archives' schedule item number**
If you identify the item number from the appropriate State Archives retention schedule, you will have an easy way to look up and verify the minimum retention for records.
- **Location**
Some office schedules indicate the location of each series to make it easier to find the records.
- **Comments**
You might also want to add additional comments to the office retention schedule. As with anything in the schedule, be sure to add only the information you need. Below are a few possible areas of comment.
 - *Appraisal or retention notes*
These notes indicate your reasons for deciding to keep any records longer than the State Archives' retention schedule indicates.
 - *Official or secondary copy*
Some office schedules indicate whether a series is the official copy or a duplicate copy. This can formalize the process of identifying the official copies of records in your offices.
 - *Confidentiality*
To ensure that people in your organization protect confidential records, add a note to your office retention schedule as a reminder.

- *Type of disposition*

Sometimes, you will need to require different types of disposition for different records. For instance, you might indicate in the office retention schedule that all student psychological files should be shredded but that general office correspondence may be discarded in the trash.

- *Notes on weeding the files*

If only part of a file is discarded at a certain time, you might note this. For some complicated case files, some offices produce case file retention sheets indicating which records to discard and which to keep.

Setting Office Retention Periods

The most important decision you need to make in any office retention schedule is when to move records out of offices and into inactive storage. This is important because you should maintain only truly active records in active office space.

Determining how long to keep records in your office is conceptually simple: Keep all records in your office until they become inactive. The difficulty is in determining when the records actually become inactive. For paper records, the general rule of thumb is that if you refer to a drawer of records less than once a month, they are inactive. For computer files, if you refer to these less than once every three months, then they are probably inactive as well. It is usually easier and faster just to talk to users of the records to determine when inactivity begins. If you have the time or inclination, you could be more exact by setting up a system for tracking use over time.

Determining Whether to Keep Records Longer Than Required

You can keep records for longer than the minimum retention periods listed in State Archives retention schedules, but if you decide to do so, proceed carefully. Keep records longer only for a compelling reason. Many people are too cautious and keep records just in case someone might ask to see them again. When determining whether to increase the retention period for a records series, discuss the issue with staff, especially those who work with the records daily. Verify that there aren't other records that could also fulfill the identified need for information. Require strong evidence of serious continuing use to justify keeping records beyond their minimum retention periods.

Sometimes you may keep records longer because of their historical value. If you believe some of your records have unique historical value, you should contact the Regional Advisory Officer in your region or the State Archives' main office in Albany for information on how to conduct an appraisal of these records. For more information on archival appraisal, see State Archives Technical Information Series #50, *Appraisal of Local Government Records for Historical Value*.

Types of Office Schedules

Office retention schedules can exist in a number of different formats. Each has specific purposes, advantages and disadvantages. Appendix B, "Sample Office Retention Schedules," provides examples of the types of office schedules discussed below.

Manual or Semi-Manual

Many people still produce office retention schedules in manual (typewritten) or semi-manual (word-processed) formats. These schedules can have any of the myriad types of information of an office retention schedule. They provide users with a familiar paper document, and they don't require that you learn how to use any new software program. The disadvantages are that these schedules are harder to update and to search than schedules in a database. The three examples of these schedules are "Office for the Aging Retention and Disposition Schedule," "School Transportation Office Retention Schedule," and "Tax Assessor's Office Retention Schedule." Users produced each of these schedules in word-processed tables to control the format of the document.

Databases

The most flexible format for an office schedule is some kind of database. Databases are easy to update and allow you to print or display the database in many formats. Databases also allow you to make the schedule available in an easy-to-search electronic version either loaded on an office PC or available on your organization's LAN or intranet. The disadvantage of a database is that the software is sometimes foreign (and, therefore, a bit difficult) for some users. The two examples of office retention schedules that are databases are the heavily formatted database report entitled "Office Retention Schedule for Purchasing" and the simple database report called "County Clerk's Department Office Retention Schedule." However, the more common view of a database might look something like the data entry screen below. You can see in this example how a database segregates different data types into "fields," making it easier to produce different kinds of reports or conduct sophisticated multi-topic searches.

Records Management Software

Records management software is any computer software designed to help you manage your records. Such software handles activities like tracking boxes in storage, tracking requests for records, and maintaining an up-to-date records inventory. The software can also provide you with many useful reports, including lists of records eligible for disposition, number of retrievals made, number of open spaces in your records center, etc. One of the many features of these software packages is the ability maintain automated office retention schedules. These software programs are essentially specialized databases. The only disadvantage they have when compared to a standard database is that they are more expensive. The time you save in not having to design your own database may make the use of such programs a big advantage. Refer to the State Archives' guidelines and listings for information on records management software.

Case File Retention Sheet

This subset of an office schedule is merely a purging guide to help office staff identify which items in a case file should be discarded at the end of the file's life cycle and which should be retained. Such a guide is necessary because case files usually have records with differing retentions in the same folder and because different organizations have different procedures regarding the retention of records in case files. Case files that need weeding before disposition include personnel, student, law enforcement, construction project, social services and medical records. The examples of a case file retention sheet are "Personnel Case File Retention Sheet" from a school district and "Developmental Disabilities Services Office Retention and Disposition Schedule." These retention sheets have a limited utility but are very helpful in those instances where they are necessary.

Ensuring People Follow Office Retention Schedules

People must follow office retention schedules for the schedules to be useful. Ensuring this is fairly simple but requires persistence. Here are a few suggestions:

- **Have staff help develop schedules**
Developing retention schedules with staff in other offices or departments ensures that they have a stake in the process. By involving others, you can include information they need in the schedules. It is essential to work with office staff to identify when records become inactive.
- **Distribute copies of the schedule**
You may distribute copies in paper or make them available electronically. Careful distribution is key. If you don't ensure that staff have access to the schedules, then they don't have a chance to follow them.
- **Make office retention schedules part of policy**
Making office retention schedules part of official policy can be an effective form of gentle persuasion.
- **Remind staff to clean their files**
Giving office personnel a friendly reminder once a year that it's time to clean out their files can be an effective tactic.
- **Introduce the schedules in any staff orientation**
You can make the use of an office retention schedule a simple administrative habit by including an introduction to the schedule in staff orientations.

Records Disposition

You should establish a formal disposition procedure that disposes of records regularly, at least once a year, but maybe quarterly or on some other schedule. An established disposition procedure safeguards against the accidental destruction of records that have not attained their minimum retention periods or that have met their retention periods but are needed for some other purpose, such as litigation or investigations.

Documenting Disposition of Records

The State Archives does not require state agencies or local governments to document disposition, but it is in your best interest to develop a records destruction authorization form to authorize and document records disposal. While the Archives does not require you to use a specific form, there are certain characteristics of a good form (see Appendix C, “Records Destruction Authorization” for a sample form). The authorization form should include series titles and dates, quantity of records, method of destruction, and authorization signatures. One or more of the following people should sign the form: the records management officer, the manager of the office that “owns” the records, and the chief administrative official. To certify destruction, the form should also include the dated signature of the witness.

Selecting a Method of Destruction

State law does not specify a destruction method for most records. However, you should destroy confidential records in a way that ensures their total illegibility, and cancelled obligations have their own specific cancellation and destruction requirements. Refer to Appendix D, “Destruction of Cancelled Obligations,” for an explanation of these requirements.

To select a method of destruction for records, carefully evaluate the records to be destroyed, local environmental restrictions, and the availability of equipment and staff resources. Consider the following questions to determine the best destruction method:

- Are the records confidential?
- What is the quantity of records to be destroyed?
- How often will records destruction take place?
- What is the physical composition of the records?
- Do the records contain numerous fasteners, such as staples or paper clips?
- Are there restrictions on incineration or disposal in a landfill in your area?
- Do you have access to a vendor who provides bonded recycling?
- Do you have space and staff for an on-site destruction program?
- Can your equipment handle the bulk to be destroyed?
- Can your shredder handle non-paper records such as microfilm?
- Will you be able to contain the dust produced by a shredder?
- Is it more efficient and economical to use an outside vendor or facility?

Once you have completed this evaluation, you can choose a suitable destruction method. Then determine what destruction alternatives are available. The most common methods of destruction include the following:

- **Landfill**

In some areas, burial in a landfill is still an option. You should shred any confidential records before disposing of them in landfills, since burial is not an assured method of destruction.

- **Incineration**

Incineration used to be a very popular method of destruction, although environmental restrictions now limit its use.

- **Shredding**

Shredding is one way to destroy records and ensure confidentiality at the same time. It has the disadvantage, however, of being time-consuming, especially if you are using a small shredder or have a large quantity of records to destroy. In addition, shredders produce a large quantity of dust, so anyone using a large shredder on a regular basis should wear a mask to filter out dust particles.

- **Recycling**

Many local governments will discover they have few destruction alternatives other than recycling. Bonded recyclers will guarantee that information contained in the records remains confidential until the records are destroyed. If you have a large quantity of records, a vendor may even provide pickup service. Contact the State Archives about recycling services available for local governments and state agencies under state contract.

- **Destroying Microfilm**

Pulverization transforms microfilm and its reels into a cotton-like substance. Some large, sophisticated shredders can shred microfilm as well as paper. However, recycle silver microfilm for its silver content. Contact your microfilm vendor to discuss the recycling and destruction services they offer.

- **Destroying Electronic Records**

You can erase and reuse magnetic media, but for the best security make sure you have erased all the information on the media prior to reuse. You can also destroy magnetic media through incineration (which melts and deforms the media) or by shredding. Destruction of electronic records, however, can be very difficult, since copies of a single file may reside in numerous locations, some not accessible even by your organization's system administrator.

With electronic records, it is important to have procedures for the deletion of electronic files. Some organizations, for instance, simply delete all e-mail older than a few months from their servers on a monthly basis. A week or so before deletion, the system administrator sends a notice advising staff to save any files they need to a separate location. This procedure reduces the quantity of unnecessary files maintained by your organization.

For More Information and Assistance

The State Archives provides records management services to local governments and state agencies. The Archives has regional offices throughout the state, and each office has an expert records specialist who can visit you and provide technical advice and assistance. Other services of the Archives include publications, training and presentations. For further information, contact your regional office or the following:

Government Records Services
New York State Archives
State Education Department
9A47 Cultural Education Center
Albany, New York 12230
(518) 474-6926
recmgmt@mail.nysed.gov

Appendix A

Retention Schedules Produced by the State Archives

For State Agencies:

General Retention and Disposition Schedule for New York State Government Records

For use by state agencies

This retention schedule provides state agencies with uniform guidelines for the retention of common administrative, fiscal and personnel records. However, since state agencies have widely varying functions, the State Archives does not produce one schedule to cover all the records produced in every state agency. State agencies interested in producing schedules that cover agency-specific records must work with the State Archives to develop schedules that meet the legal, audit, administrative and other requirements for those records. If you are interested in producing such a schedule for your state agency, contact the Archives at (518) 474-6926, but first contact your state agency records management officer (RMO) to make sure a schedule has not already been produced.

For Local Governments:

Diamonds within these local government schedules mark items that are new to that particular edition of the schedule or which have been significantly revised.

Records Retention and Disposition Schedule CO-2

For use by counties

This retention schedule covers all the records maintained by counties, except

- Cancelled obligations (covered by Section 63.10 of the Local Finance Law and Part 55 of 2NYCRR)
- Court records in county offices (governed by the Office of Court Administration)
- Election records of county boards of elections (see *Retention and Disposition Schedule: Election Records* below)
- State government records in county offices (such as motor vehicle records and official records of births, deaths, and marriages, 1881–present)

Records Retention and Disposition Schedule ED-1

For use by school districts, BOCES, county vocational education and extension boards, and teacher resource and computer training centers

This retention schedule covers all the records maintained by school districts and other local education agencies, except

- Cancelled obligations (covered by Section 63.10 of the Local Finance Law and Part 55 of 2NYCRR)

Records Retention and Disposition Schedule MI-1

For use by miscellaneous local governments

- Public benefit corporations, certain public libraries, autonomous special or improvement districts, joint local government entities, regional planning agencies, soil and water conservation districts (except in Westchester County), consolidated health districts, county cooperative extension associations, local development corporations, autonomous community colleges, the Fashion Institute of Technology, and miscellaneous local government entities created by state or local legislation

This retention schedule covers all the records maintained by the miscellaneous governments listed above, **except**

- Public benefit corporations or other special purpose units of local government located in New York City, which may (pursuant to Section 185.5 (c) of 8NYCRR) use their own local records retention schedules in lieu of MI-1 to cover the same or additional records. For more information, contact the Archives at (518) 474-6926.
- Housing authorities, whose records are exempt from State Archives' jurisdiction for disposition. The Division of Housing and Community Renewal must approve the disposition of records relating to the operation of state-financed programs. For all other records, housing authorities may establish their own records disposition policies, except for minutes of the housing authority (including appendices and attachments) and copies of annual reports to the Division of Housing and Community Renewal. Housing authorities must retain these records permanently. All records disposition decisions must also meet any applicable records retention requirements of federal and state agencies, including the Office of the State Comptroller.
- The Utica Transportation Authority, which should see Section 68 of Transportation Law for special requirements for the disposition of its records.

Records Retention and Disposition Schedule MU-1

For use by municipalities (cities, towns, villages, and fire districts)

This retention schedule covers all the records maintained by municipalities, except

- Cancelled obligations (covered by Section 63.10 of the Local Finance Law and Part 55 of 2NYCRR)
- Court records in municipal offices (governed by the Office of Court Administration)
- State government records in municipal offices (such as official records of births, deaths, and marriages, 1881–present)

Retention and Disposition Schedule: Election Records

For use by county boards of elections

This retention schedule covers election records maintained by county boards of elections. For general administrative records, the boards of elections use the CO-2.

Appendix B

Sample Office Retention Schedules

Manual or Semi-Manual Schedules

Office of the Aging Retention and Disposition Schedule

School Transportation Office Retention Schedule

Tax Assessor's Office Retention Schedule

Automated Schedules

Office Retention Schedule for Purchasing

County Clerk's Department Office Retention Schedule

Case File Retention Sheets

Personnel Case File Retention Sheet

Developmental Disabilities Services Office Retention and Disposition Schedule

Office for the Aging Retention and Disposition Schedule

Record Title	Retention	Page/Item in CO-2
Abstract of Claims Program Expense Books Voucher Books	PERMANENT	Department Decision
Accounting Register	6 years after last entry	[280]
Agenda	1 year	[3]
Agreements, Legal	6 years after expiration or last payment	[6]
Applications, Job Unsuccessful candidates	3 years	[421]
Audit	PERMANENT	[293a]
Budget, Final	PERMANENT	Department Decision
Budget, Preliminary	6 years	[47]
Budget Preparation Materials	3 years	[45]
Certificate of Insurance	6 years after expiration	[329]
Certification of Eligible List	6 years after expiration of	[420b]

Sent to Appointing Agency	eligible list	
Claims, Payment	6 years	[308]
Claims, State Aid Reimbursement	6 years	[310]
Clients: Individual, EISEP	6 years after last entry	[36]
Clients: HEAP (Duplicate copies)	3 years	Department Decision
Compliers/Requests for Service (for routine services)	1 year after disposition	[29]
Contracts	6 years after expiration or last payment	[6]
Correspondence: Cover Letters and Transmittals	1 year	[10c]
Correspondence: General	6 years	[10b]
Correspondence: Policy Making	PERMANENT	[10a]
Daily Cash Record (includes Donations, Lifeline Receipts)	6 years	[283]

School Transportation Office Retention Schedule

This list is a records retention schedule designed specifically for the records of the district transportation office and should help the office manage its records more efficiently. By using this schedule conscientiously and by discarding and transferring records to the records center on an annual basis, the office should be able to control its records better. Comments indicate more specific retention actions that the office must make. The records are listed in order by series title, but some key words within the title are in bold face to make them easier to find. If you have any questions about this schedule, contact Mike DiFrancisco at extension 899.

SERIES	OFFICE RETENTION	STORAGE RETENTION	SCHEDULE & NUMBER
Bids, successful	2 years	+ 4 years	ED-1: 259
Comments: Keep in office two years for reference, then transfer to the records center.			
Bus driver handbook documenting policies and procedures	until separation	Permanent	ED-1: 9
Comments: Send one copy of handbook to records center when it is superseded.			
Bus driver qualification file, including driver training certificates and	1 year after separation	6 years after separation	ED-1: 303

character references			
Bus route schedule or diagram: GIS version	update annually	n/a	ED-1: 305a
Comments: These records are updated annually; keep GIS version for current schedules and diagrams; maintain paper records for extra six years.			
Bus route schedule or diagram: Paper printouts from GIS	2 years	+ 6 years	ED-1: 305a
Comments: Keep two years of paper versions in office for reference.			
District-wide consumption and dispensing records for vehicle fuel and oil	6 years	n/a	ED-1: 253
Comments: Since records are not voluminous, dispose from office.			
Driver's daily log report	2 years	+ 4 years	ED-1: 308
Employees' payroll report slips detailing sick, personal and other leave	1 year	+ 5 years	ED-1: 184
Employees' time cards / sheets	1 year	+ 5 years	ED-1: 183
Field trip report	1 year	+ 5 years	ED-1: 395
Grant program files	2 years	+ 8 years	ED-1: 13a&b
Comments: Keep records in office for two years; then records center will keep records for six additional years, to ensure all files are kept at least "6 years after renewal or close of grant or denial of application" (as required in ED-1 schedule).			
Legal agreements, including contract, lease and release involving district vehicles	until expiration	+ 6 years	ED-1: 6
Comments: Keep records in office until expiration or final payment, then transfer to records center.			
Maintenance, testing, service and repair records for vehicles: Cumulative summary for vehicle	6 years after vehicle is no longer in use	n/a	ED-1: 250a
Comments: Records kept in office because of reference needs; segregate service records into files by year once they are superseded or become obsolete.			

Maintenance, testing, service and repair records for vehicles: Individual report when posted to summary report	1 year	6 years	ED-1: 250b
Maintenance, testing, service and repair records for vehicles	until log is filed	+ 6 years	ED-1: 250d
Transportation records, non-public schools, including parental requests and consents	3 years	n/a	ED-1: 309
Personnel case file, master summary record	6 years after separation	Permanent	ED-1: 199a
Comments: Personnel records should be segregated from the active personnel files once they become inactive and filed by the year they became inactive. See special personnel case file retention sheet for specifics about what records are considered part of the district's "master summary record."			
Personnel case file, other records	6 years after separation	n/a	ED-1: 199b
Comments: These non-permanent records should be weeded from the personnel files before forwarding the files to the records center. See special personnel case file retention sheet for specifics about which records should be weeded from the file.			
Purchase orders (duplicates)	2 years	n/a	ED-1: 19
Comments: Accounts payable maintains original for 6 years.			
Report of theft, vandalism, arson, or property damage to bus garage or vehicles	6 years after vandalism	n/a	ED-1: 32
Comments: These records are uncommon, so maintain them in office until time to discard them.			
Request for use of vehicle (when a chargeback is involved)	3 years	+ 3 years	ED-1: 254a
Comments: Keep in office for three years, long enough to accumulate one full box of records.			
Request for use of vehicle (when no chargeback is involved)	1 year	n/a	ED-1: 254b

Seniority list ranking employees by length of service	3 years after superseded or obsolete	n/a	ED-1: 230
Comments: Office should segregate lists into files by year once they are superseded or become obsolete. Discard from office.			
Vendor listing printout	As updated	n/a	ED-1: 260
Warehouse requisition form for supplies (duplicates)	1 year	n/a	ED-1: 19
Comments: Warehouse maintains original for 6 years.			

Tax Assessor's Office Retention Schedule

Each department is required to adhere conscientiously to the retention policy of the town under the guidance and with the assistance of the town clerk, as authorized in board resolution 93-10. Town Clerk Mary Sanibel's office has developed this office retention schedule, with the help of Town Assessor Anne McGuire, to ensure that each department can easily identify those records that should be disposed of or moved to storage each January.

The "Active" column shows the total number of years, beyond the current year, to keep the record in the office. The "Semi-Active" column shows the total number of years, including active retention, to keep the records in the first-floor hall storage area. The "Storage" column shows the total number of years (including active and semi-active storage) to keep the records. Comments indicate when the Tax Assessor's office is responsible for records destruction, whether a record is an official or a secondary copy, and other comments. In a few instances, the comments indicate when the Town Assessor and Records Advisory Board agreed to keep a record longer than the retention period required by the State Archives's MU-1 retention schedule. These increased retention periods and this office schedule became part of the town's official retention policy upon its effective date.

The Tax Assessor's office is responsible for making sure it adheres to this retention schedule but should feel free to contact Town Clerk Mary Sanibel or Records Clerk Tom Loquante if any questions arise.

Series	Item No.	Format	Active	Semi-Active	Storage	Comments
Annual assessment report	MU-1, 592	Paper	2 yrs.	n/a	10 yrs.	Official copy
Assessment rolls, final	MU-1, 19	Elec. (Dup.)	2 yrs.	n/a	n/a	Delete from computer
Assessment rolls, final, unwarranted	MU-1, 594b	Paper	1 yr.	n/a	10 yrs.	

Assessment working documents	MU-1, 19	Elec. (Dup.)	0	n/a	n/a	Only part of the series
Assessment working documents	MU-1, 593	Paper	0	1 yr.	2 yrs.	Official copy
Certificates of mortgage tax apportionments	MU-1, 604a	Paper	3 yrs.	n/a	n/a	Dispose from office
Commercial property record cards	MU-1, 583	Elec.	Perm.	n/a	n/a	Keep electronic version of record cards on LAN
Commercial property record cards	MU-1, 19	Paper	2 yrs.	n/a	n/a	Secondary copy; keep for need to verify information
Change of assessment notices	MU-1, 590	Paper	0	1 yr.	10 yrs.	Kept 4 yrs. beyond MU-1
Correspondence	MU-1, 10b	Paper	2 yrs.	n/a	6 yrs.	Treat all correspondence as 6 year retention
Cross-reference tax listing	MU-1, 25	Paper	1 yr.	n/a	n/a	Dispose from office
Deeds & building permits	MU-1, 19	Paper	3 yrs.	n/a	n/a	Duplicate copies
Equalization rate records	MU-1, 586b	Paper	3 yrs.	n/a	n/a	Dispose from office
Equalization rate records	MU-1, 586a	Paper	2 yrs.	6 yrs.	Perm.	
Grievance forms	MU-1, 590	Paper	2 yrs.	6 yrs.	n/a	Dispose from hall storage
Invoices	MU-1, 275	Paper	2 yrs.	6 yrs.	n/a	Dispose from hall storage
Minutes, town board	MU-1, 19	Paper	2 yrs.	n/a	n/a	Dispose from office; duplicate
Property record cards	MU-1, 583	Elec.	Perm.	n/a	n/a	Keep electronic version on LAN

						permanently
Property records cards	MU-1, 19	Paper	2 yrs.	n/a	n/a	Secondary copy; keep for need to verify information
Property sales book	MU-1, 606	Paper	2 yrs.	n/a	6 yrs.	Dispose from office
Property sales book report	MU-1, 19	Paper	1 yr.	n/a	n/a	Dispose from office
Property valuation records	MU-1, 584	Elec.	4 yrs.	n/a	n/a	Delete from LAN
Real property tax lien sales	MU-1, 599	Paper	2 yrs.	4 yrs.	Perm.	
Tax escrow files	MU-1, 597	Paper	4 yrs.	n/a	6 yrs. after account termination	Review and weed each year
Tax exemption files	MU-1, 589	Paper	2 yrs.	6 yrs.	n/a	Dispose from hall storage
Tax exemption register	MU-1, 25	Paper	2 yrs.	n/a	n/a	Dispose from office
Tax exempt market value estimates	MU-1, 584	Elec.	4 yrs.	n/a	n/a	Delete from LAN
Tax exempt market value estimates	MU-1, 19	Paper	0	n/a	n/a	Secondary copy
Tax maps	MU-1, 587	Paper	6 yrs.	n/a	Perm.	
Tax map index	MU-1, 25	Elec.	Perm.	n/a	n/a	Maintain on LAN
Tentative assessment roll	MU-1, 594	Paper	1 yr.	5 yrs.	n/a	Dispose from hall storage
Unpaid tax files	MU-1, 596	Elec.	6 yrs.	n/a	n/a	Delete from LAN

approved by Tax Assessor Anne McGuire, 27 Feb 2000
approved by Records Advisory Board, 14 March 2000
effective 1 Apr 2000

Office Retention Schedule for Purchasing

This retention schedule lists the retention periods the State Archives has identified for records held by the Purchasing Department, how long we will retain those records in the office, and for how many years we will keep the records in total. Those records marked with an asterisk (*) we've decided to keep longer than the minimum indicated by the State Archives retention schedule.

Records Series	Archives Schedule	Retention Minimum	Office Retain	Storage Retain
Annual department reports	MU-1/19	0 (duplicate)	6 years*	n/a
Board meeting minutes	MU-1/10b	0 (duplicate)	2 years	n/a
Correspondence and memos	MU-1/209	6 years	6 years	n/a
Hazardous contact	MU-1/379a	40 years after contact	1 year	40 years file after contact
Insurance policies	MU-1/299	6 years after expiration	2 years after expiration	8 years after expiration
Invoices	MU-1/275	6 years	2 years	6 years
Performance guarantees	MU-1/563	6 years after expiration	2 years after	8 years after expiration
Property acquisition / sale file	MU-1/475	PERMANENT	2 years	PERMANENT
Purchasing files	MU-1/561	6 years	4 years	8 years*
Purchasing requisitions	MU-1/559	6 years	2 years	6 years
Vendor files	MU-1/562	0 after superseded	Replace every year	n/a

County Clerk's Department Office Retention Schedule

Title: Administrative file (Records Management)
 Schedule item: CO-2, General, 10c: correspondence
 Office retention: 1 year
 Total retention: 1 year
 Appraisal: N/A

Title: Adoptions
 Schedule item: OCA, Civil Court & County Adoptions, 20010

Office retention: PERMANENT
Total retention: PERMANENT
Appraisal: Retain paper copy in office; microfilm use copy in Records Center.

Title: Affidavits and orders
Schedule item: OCA, Civil Court Supreme & County: other case files, 20230
Office retention: 10 years
Total retention: PERMANENT
Appraisal: Maintained permanently in records center.

Title: Annual report of the Board of Excise
Schedule item: CO-2, General, 23
Office retention: 3 years
Total retention: PERMANENT
Appraisal: Keep only three years in office since reference drops off quickly.

Title: Annual reports of corporations
Schedule item: CO-2, County Clerk, Miscellaneous, 192
Office retention: 3 years
Total retention: PERMANENT
Appraisal: Keep only three years in office since reference drops off quickly.

Title: Application to use records (Records Management)
Schedule item: CO-2, Archives/RM, 44a
Office retention: 6 years
Total retention: 6 years
Appraisal: CO-2 gives retention as "0 after no longer needed." Six years allows enough time to discover any thefts or destruction and allow us to find the perpetrator.

Personnel Case File Retention Sheet

Since our district does not have centralized personnel functions, each department must maintain and weed their own department's personnel records. This sheet lists all the types of records found in personnel folders and whether they should be discarded six years after the employee has left the district employ or whether the records are permanent and should be retained and forwarded to the records center for microfilming. In those few cases where an employee is disputing or otherwise having trouble with retirement benefits or is in litigation against the district, you must retain the entire file for at least six years after the matter has been brought to a conclusion.

Application form and letter	Discard
Appointment letter	Permanent
Benefits information	Discard
Contracts (for superintendent)	Permanent
Declination to join retirement system	Permanent
Job descriptions	Permanent
Insurance information	Discard
Letter of recommendation from district	Discard
Letter of resignation from employee	Discard
Memos (relating to discipline, etc.)	Discard
Oath of office	Permanent
Reference letters	Discard
Resume	Discard
Salary information	Permanent
Teaching certificate	Permanent
Transcript from college	Permanent

Note: Many records identified as permanent on this sheet are not scheduled as permanent on the State Archives' ED-1. These are examples of local decisions to increase retention periods. You should not assume this sheet represents the Archives' recommendations.

**Developmental Disabilities Services Office
Retention and Disposition Schedule**

Below is a retention and disposition schedule for managing inactive records. The retention period refers to individuals who are beyond the age of majority. The Health Information Management Office will provide you with a list of our younger population for whom this schedule DOES NOT APPLY. DO NOT DESTROY FORMS THAT ARE NOT LISTED.

IDENTIFYING DATA SECTION

IPP 4 22.1A Med.	Diagnostic Report	Destroy (Current kept in Active File & originals in HIM Office)
AHR 116	Disposition Report	Destroy all - Obsolete
43, 43	Notice of Status and Rights	Destroy (Current kept in Active File & originals in HIM Office)
41, 42, 43	Legal Papers	Destroy (Current kept in Active File & originals in HIM Office)
WDC 139	Clinic Treatment Program Referral	Retain 7 years; destroy others
WDC 19	Community Services Plan	Destroy (Current kept in Active File)
STAT 31	Change in Statistical Data	Retain 1 year in Active File; Destroy others
WDC 395	Addendum to Community Services Plan	Destroy (Current kept in Active File)
WDC 394	Residential/Day Program Changes	Destroy (Current kept in Active File)
WDC 80	Respite Agreement	Destroy (Current kept in Active File)
WDC 99	Respite Consent	Destroy (Current kept in Active File)
WDC 101	Medication List and Consents	Destroy (Current kept in Active File)
WDC 112	Respite; Client Information Summary	Destroy (Current kept in Active File)
WDC 58	Consent to Release Information	Destroy (Current kept in Active File)
WDC 44	Consent for Photograph	Destroy (Current kept in Active File)
WDC 403	Money Management Consent	Destroy (Current kept in Active File)
OMR 170	Personal Allowance Record Option	Destroy (Current kept in Active File)
DMH 5	Notification of Referral for Services, Verification of 620 Eligibility	Retain 7 Years (Destroy others)

Appendix C

Records Destruction Authorization

Record Series	Dates of Records	Schedule Item	Retention
<p>Destruction authorized by</p> <p>Records Management Officer _____ Date _____</p> <p>Department Head _____ Date _____</p> <p>Destruction certified by</p> <p>Witness _____ Date _____</p>			

Appendix D

Destruction of Cancelled Obligations

Cancelled obligations (bonds, corporate stock, notes, or coupons) may be legally destroyed, but only by following specific procedures that differ from those for other local government records. Cancelled obligations are not subject to the Local Government Records Law (Section 57.25 of the Arts and Cultural Affairs Law), and they are not covered by State Archives' local government retention schedules. Section 63.10 of the Local Finance Law outlines the legal authority for destruction of these records. This law states that "they shall be cancelled or destroyed in such a manner as the State Comptroller shall prescribe." The actual method of destruction is explained in Part 55 of 2NYCRR. These regulations outline both how actual obligations are to be cancelled (by stamping and perforation) and how the cancelled obligations then may be destroyed (by "burning, pulverizing or shredding"). Address any questions concerning destruction of cancelled obligations to the Office of the State Comptroller, Division of Legal Services, Alfred E. Smith State Office Building, Albany, NY 12236; telephone, (518) 474-5586.

NOTE: This section of the Local Finance Law does not apply to surety bonds (undertakings) of local officials or to performance bonds given by contractors. These types of "bonds" are listed on State Archives schedules.

Certain local governments may have bonds or other obligations that predate 1910. These were often issued in conjunction with railroad and turnpike construction in the nineteenth century. Such bonds may possess archival value. If ornately engraved, they may possess intrinsic value that necessitates preservation in their original format. Bonds with intrinsic value should not be mutilated or otherwise destroyed without consulting the State Archives. If you hold these older bonds in your custody, contact your State Archives regional office for advice.

LOCAL FINANCE LAW

§ 63.10 Cancellation of obligations

When obligations are paid, notwithstanding the provisions of any other general, special or local law or of article forty-six of the education law relating to public records, they shall be cancelled or destroyed in such manner as the state comptroller shall prescribe by a rule or order to be filed in his office and in such other offices as he may designate.

Added L. 1943, c. 711 § 23; amended L. 1945, c. 837 § 18.

Part 55 of Title 2 of the Official Compilation of Codes, Rules and Regulations of the State of New York.

(formerly REGULATION XXIV)

CANCELLATION AND DESTRUCTION OF OBLIGATIONS OF MUNICIPALITIES, SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND DISTRICT CORPORATIONS

Regulations promulgated May 8, 1946 by the State Comptroller pursuant to section 63.10 of the Local Finance Law; revised May 7, 1968.

1. Cancellation of paid obligations. Bonds, corporate stock, notes, coupons, or other evidences of indebtedness issued pursuant to the Local Finance Law or any other law, when paid, shall be cancelled in either of the following ways:

a. by perforating the obligation with the word "Paid", or with the word "Cancelled", or the substantial equivalent of either word, and with words or numbers which will indicate the date of payment. Beneath such perforations and upon the face of the obligation shall be (1) subscribed in ink the name and title of the chief fiscal officer of the issuer or his duly delegated deputy, or the name and title of an officer of the paying agent of the issuer, or (2) a perforated abbreviation of the name of the municipality, school district or district corporation, such as "C of N.Y."

b. by writing or stamping in ink the word "Paid" together with the date of payment upon the face of the obligation. Beneath such writing or stamp shall be subscribed in ink the name and title of the chief fiscal officer of the issuer, or his duly delegated deputy, or the name and title of an officer of the paying agent of the issuer. If this method is used, the signature or signatures of the officer or officers upon the obligation shall be cut or torn from the cancelled obligation.

2. Destruction of cancelled obligations. Bonds, corporate stock, notes, coupons, or other evidences of indebtedness issued pursuant to the Local Finance Law or any other law, when paid, may be destroyed, after prior cancellation, by the burning, pulverizing or shredding of such obligations by the chief fiscal officer of the issuer or by this duly delegated deputy or by a duly authorized paying agent, except that registered obligations shall not be destroyed until six years after the date of payment. Such destruction, whether by burning, pulverizing or shredding, shall be effected in such a manner as will render reproduction of such obligations in their original form impossible.

3. Destruction of obligations by registration agents. A registration agent may destroy bonds, corporate stock, notes and coupons when necessary to comply with the provisions of title 5 of article 2 of the Local Finance Law. Such destruction shall be accomplished by any of the following methods:

a. by burning, pulverizing or shredding the obligations.

b. by perforating the obligation with the word "Void" or with the word "Cancelled", or the substantial equivalent of either word, and with words or numbers which will indicate the date upon which the obligation was rendered void. Beneath such perforations and upon the face of the obligations shall be (1) subscribed in ink the name and title of the registration agent of the issuer or his duly delegated deputy, or the name and title of an officer of the bank or trust company acting as registration agent of the issuer, or (2) a perforated abbreviation of the name of the municipality, school district or district corporation, such as "C of N.Y."

c. by writing or stamping in ink the word "Void" upon the face of the obligations. Beneath such writing or stamp there shall be written or stamped in ink the date upon which the obligation was

rendered void. Beneath such word and date there shall be subscribed in ink the name and title of the registration agent of the issuer or his duly delegated deputy, or the name and title of an officer of a bank or trust company acting as a registration agent of the issuer. If this method is used the signature or signatures of the officer or officers upon the obligation shall be cut or torn from the destroyed obligation.

4. Cancellation of coupons by counties or cities. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraphs 1 and 3 of this Order, any county or city may cancel paid coupons or may destroy unpaid coupons by perforating the coupon in two places with holes approximately three-sixteenths of an inch in diameter. One of such perforations shall be through the signature and the other through the dollar amount.

5. Burning, pulverizing or shredding of obligations. Should obligations be destroyed in the manner set forth in subdivision (b) or (c) of paragraph 3 of this Order, or in the manner set forth in paragraph 4 of this Order, they shall be burned, pulverized or shredded within one year from the date of such destruction.

6. Records to be kept. A record shall be kept by each chief fiscal officer, registration agent and paying agent of all obligations cancelled or destroyed by them, respectively, which record shall properly describe the obligation cancelled or destroyed and state the date of such cancellation or destruction.

7. Use of facsimile signature. Any officer required by this order to subscribe his name upon an obligation, which is to be cancelled or destroyed may use, in lieu of an actual signature, a stamp or other device which will produce in ink a facsimile signature of such officer.

8. Cancellation and destruction of partially destroyed or defaced obligations. When new bonds, corporate stock, notes or coupons are to be reissued pursuant to the provisions of section 164.00 of the Local Finance Law, to replace a partially destroyed or defaced obligation, there shall be written or stamped in ink upon the face of the obligation, if possible, or if not possible then upon a paper attached to the obligation, the following words: "Void. New obligation issued pursuant to Section 164.00 of the Local Finance on _____ 19____". The chief fiscal officer, or his duly delegated deputy, shall subscribe his name and title to such statement. Such partly destroyed or partly defaced obligation shall not be destroyed until six years after the payment of the new obligation issued in lieu thereof, at which time the destruction shall be by burning.

9. Effective date. This order shall take effect immediately and shall be filed in the Department of Audit and Control and a duplicate original copy hereof shall be filed in the Department of State.

(Adopted May 8, 1946; Revised May 7, 1968)

Appendix E

Request from Local Governments for Approval to Dispose of Records Created Before 1910

Government Records Services
New York State Archives
9A47 Cultural Education Center
Albany, New York 12230
(518) 474-6926

Title of records:	
Dates of records:	
Volume (in cubic feet):	

Description of records (content, use, etc.):			
Is the information in these records available elsewhere?	No ____	Yes ____	
If yes, where?			
Are these records listed on a State Archives schedule?	No ____	Yes ____	
If yes, provide the schedule and item number:			
Have these records been microfilmed?	No ____	Yes ____	
What is the condition of the records?	Good__	Fair__	Poor__
Explain any problems:			

Name of Applicant:

Title of Applicant:

Local Government:

Phone:

Address:

Signature:

Date:

Request from Local Governments for Approval to Dispose of Records Created Before 1910

Explanation

Local governments must use this form to request approval to dispose of records created before 1910. Records of this age often have continuing historical or research value for the following reasons:

- 1.** Other documentation no longer exists. Many earlier records were destroyed through natural disaster or through destruction by public officials prior to the passage of the first state statute in 1911 covering the disposition of local public records.
- 2.** The volume and type of information contained in records have changed since the beginning of the twentieth century. Older records sometimes have more detailed and historically significant information than those produced today.
- 3.** Early records sometimes have intrinsic value beyond the information they contain, which means the records are important to keep in their original form.

Process

Please complete all sections of this form. The State Archives needs this information to determine the value of the specific records.

Send the completed form to the address on the form. The State Archives will carefully review the information and respond in writing, indicating whether or not you may dispose of the records.

If you have any questions, contact the State Archives' Government Records Services at (518) 474-6926 or via e-mail at recmgmt@mail.nysed.gov

Appendix F

Glossary of Terms in Records Retention

active record

a record used frequently (at least once per month per file drawer for paper records)

administrative value

the usefulness of a record to an organization in the conduct of its daily business

appraisal

the process of evaluating records based on their value to an organization, particularly when used to determine if the records have permanent historical value

archival value

the long-term usefulness of a record for research that determines whether a record should be kept permanently

case file retention sheet

a list of the various types of records in a case file along with the retention periods or retention options for each

confidential

containing information that cannot be disclosed to the public without special authorization

destruction

the action of making a record totally unreadable

disposition

the final action made to records, either to destroy them or transfer them to an archives

duplicate

an extra copy of a record

fiscal value

the usefulness of a record in documenting financial decisions and activities

FOIL

See "Freedom of Information Law"

Freedom of Information Law (FOIL)

the New York State law that outlines the rights of the public to access public records

frozen record

a record that cannot be destroyed on schedule because special circumstances (such as a legal suit, a court order, or a scheduled audit) require the retention

General Schedule

the general schedule that covers the records of state agencies; the "General Retention and Disposition Schedule for New York State Government Records"

general schedule

a retention schedule developed to serve the retention needs of a group of related organizations (as opposed to a schedule written for a specific organization)

historical value

the value of a document to support historical research

inactive record

a record accessed infrequently (for paper records, less than once per month per file drawer) but that is not yet ready for disposition

inactive storage

the maintenance of inactive records in a storage area separate from active office

incineration

the destruction of records by burning

legal value

the usefulness of a record to support an organization's business agreements and ownership rights, and to document the rights of citizens

life cycle

the span of time of a record from its creation, through its useful life, to its final disposition or retention

obsolete record

a record that has met its retention period, is no longer useful to the organization, and may be destroyed

office retention schedule

an abbreviated records retention schedule that includes only those records in a particular office and, in addition, indicates when those records should be transferred from active office space to inactive storage

official copy

an original record or a copy of an original record that is used to meet the minimum retention period for that record; also called "record copy"

RAO

See "regional advisory officer (RAO)"

RDA

See "Records Disposition Authorization (RDA)"

RDR

See "Records Disposition Request (RDR)"

record copy

See "official copy"

records destruction authorization form

a form that documents permission to destroy certain records and that often includes documentation of the actual destruction

Records Disposition Authorization (RDA)

the document finalized by the State Archives that formalizes a retention period for a particular records series of a state agency

Records Disposition Request (RDR)

a form completed by a state agency and sent to the State Archives that describes a records series and proposes a retention period for that series

records management software

any software product that supports the filing, retrieving, and disposing of records

records retention and disposition schedule

a list of records series titles that indicates the length of time to maintain each series; also called a "records schedule" or a "retention schedule"

records schedule

See "records retention and disposition schedule"

records series

a group of related records (such as minutes of a board, payrolls, and purchase orders) that are normally used and filed as a unit and that normally have the same retention requirements

recycling

the destruction of records by processing the medium of the records so they can be reused, such as the processing of paper records into paper pulp and back into paper

regional advisory officer (RAO)

a representative of the New York State Archives who provides records management advice to local governments and state agencies in a region of the state

research value

the usefulness of a record to support historical and other research

retention

the process of keeping records for the amount of time required given their administrative, fiscal, legal, or historical value and use; also called "records"

retention period

the amount of time a record must be kept to meet administrative, fiscal, legal, or historical requirements

retention schedule

See "records retention and disposition schedule"

schedule (noun)

See "records retention and disposition schedule"

schedule (verb)

to determine and formalize the retention period for a records series

schedule item

an entry in a records schedule that describes and gives the retention period for certain records

series

See "records series"

shredding

a method of destruction that reduces records to small unreadable strips or bits

subject files

a records series that consists of files on various topics maintained in alphabetical order

weeding

the process of removing and discarding unnecessary papers from a file