Managing Our Records

A **record** is information, regardless of physical form or characteristics, that documents a transaction or activity of an agency and that is created, received or retained pursuant to law or in connection with a transaction, business or activity of your agency. You have a responsibility to handle records according to Commonwealth policies, as well as state and federal laws.

What is records management all about?

Records management helps us with: Ensuring Commonwealth records are retained and, throughout their lifecycle, protected, available, and disposed of according to law and policy. Records management helps us with improving efficiency, preserving our history, and enabling transparency.

What needs to be maintained?

We keep records based on content rather than format. Examples of the kinds of records you would likely retain for some duration (based on your agency file plan) include: program-related correspondence, business-related correspondence, activity and statistical reports, training materials you have created or presented, and strategic planning or project documentation.

Where and How do we maintain records?

Your agency file plan will tell you where and how records are currently maintained. Your Agency Records Coordinator can help your office or bureau create and maintain a records file plan. Not all records file plans look the same, but every file plan should include the following components: the records common name, records description, records series number, records series title, records storage location, records retention periods, records disposition instructions, and records contact information.

When do we dispose of records?

The appropriate records retention and disposition schedule will tell you how long records should be retained based on legal, fiscal, administrative, and historical requirements, and the method of disposal with specific instructions when that retention period ends.

If you answer *yes* to any of the following questions, the information is considered a record and you will likely need to keep it. Refer to your agency file plan to determine where records are maintained and for how long. If you aren't sure, ask your Agency Records Coordinator.

Is the information the product of some work that I have done as part of my official job duties?

Do I use the information to make decisions that are part of my official job duties?

Is the information a request or a directive for me to take some sort of action as part of my official job duties?

Am I the originator of information that reflects a decision affecting policy or procedures?

Does the information prove that I took some sort of action in support of my agency's mission?

A **transitory record** has short term legal, fiscal or administrative value. There is no specific amount of time listed to retain transitory records on the General Records Retention and Disposition Schedule. The General Schedule states that you may discard them when no longer of administrative value. Examples include: preliminary draft version materials, confirmation of meeting logistics, routing slips and documents that are superseded or updated.

Non-records can be disposed of immediately. Examples include: vendor catalogs, phone books, blank forms, duplicate copies of records (paper or electronic) used for convenience or reference purposes only, working papers such as documents without substantive comments, rough notes, and calculations, and unsolicited email (internal or external) such as reminders received by all staff and spam.