



Records and information management in Minnesota

Part 1 of a webinar series on records retention

MDH Center for Public Health Practice
December 2021



Records retention webinar series

1. **Records and information management**
2. Records retention schedules
3. Preserving and disposing of government records
4. Essential records management

Full webinar series: www.health.mn.gov; search for “records retention”



Agenda

- Records management principles
- What is a record?
- How do I manage a record?



Why records retention?

Records retention saves us time, space, and money.

It allows us to concentrate on doing our work.

It ensures we're accountable to Minnesotans

Requirements for records

Records and information management:

Creating, receiving, maintaining, using, and disposing of records

- Official Records Act (Minn. Stat. § 15.17)
- Government Records Administration (Minn. Stat. § 138.17)
- Uniform Electronic Transaction Act (Minn. Stat. § 325L)
- Photographic Copies of Business and Public Records Act (Minn. Stat. § 600.135)
- Data Practices Act (Minn. Stat. § 13 and Minn. R. 1205)
- HIPAA (Pub. L. No. 104-191)

Definition: Record



A “record” is typically defined as any documentation or information created and stored at an organization that is essential to the functioning of that organization, regardless of the format or medium.

Record keepers

- Everyone who does business on government's behalf is a record-keeper.
- A primary record-keeper acts as the record's steward throughout the retention schedule.
- If you're not the primary record-keeper but receive a record: The first person in an email "to" line makes sure the record ends up with the primary record-keeper or is placed in the record-keeping system.

Value

- Is there a legal, financial, historical, or administrative need for the record/info?
- Emotional, sentimental, or intuitive value does not determine a government record.



Definition: Information



“Information” is typically defined as any documentation that helps us understand a topic. It doesn’t usually need to be retained as long as a record.

Definition: Non-record

A “non-record” is any document, device, or item, regardless of physical form or characteristic, created or received that **does not** serve to document the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the office.



Definitions: Retention schedule, record series

Retention schedule:

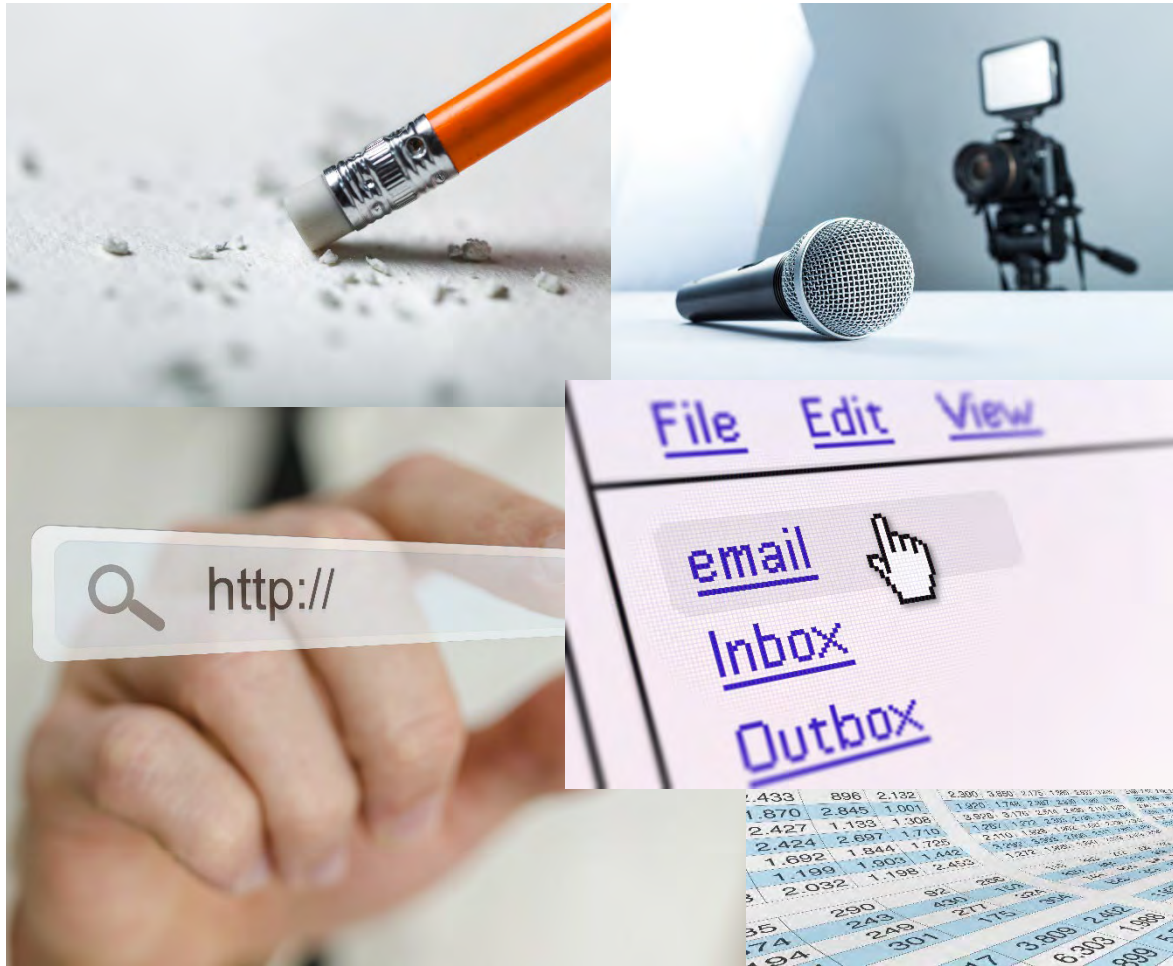
A policy or plan that defines how long an organization must keep information, and provides guidelines for how that information should be disposed of

Record series:

A group of similar documents that are related as the result of being created, received, or used in the same activity or function

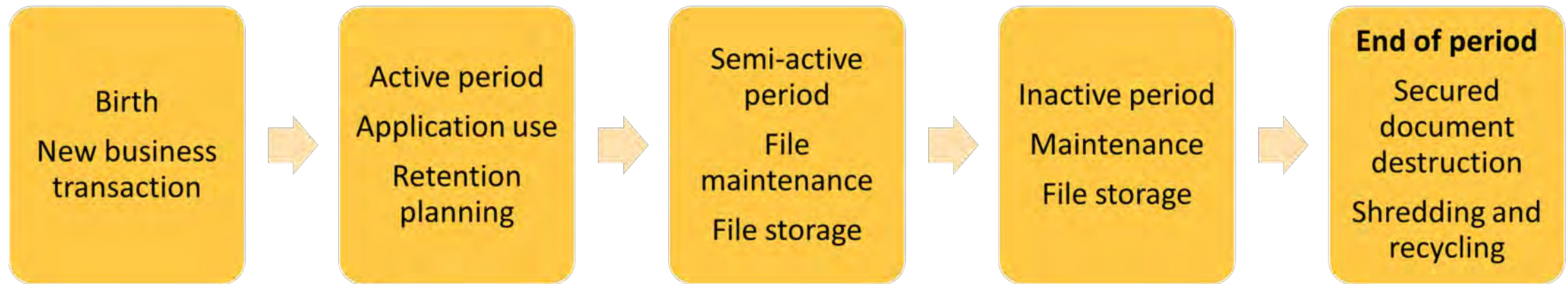


Appearance: What do records look like?



- **Physical:** Paper, memos, contracts
- **Images:** Videos, photos, audio recordings
- **Electronic:** Email, attachments, instant messages/chats
- **Network:** Drives (private and shared)
- **Online/web:** Internet, intranet, social media
- **Database**

Life cycle of a record



Filing plan for records



- Aim for quick and easy access to records and info
- Use consistent naming
- Common filing examples: Alphabetical, chronological, geographical, numerical, by topic

Filing methods: Alphabetical



- Helpful for retrieving by name or topic
- Requires consistency in naming, filing
- May need to specify as series grows
- May require cross-referencing

Filing methods: Chronological



- For records created or maintained daily
- Retrieval can be slow
 - Few remember dates accurately
 - Date of occurrence rarely how we retrieve information

Filing methods: Geographical



- By place name
- Tends to grow large over time
- Subdivision often required

Filing methods: Numerical



By serial number:

- Files that arrive with a predetermined number
- Numbers assigned upon creation (invoices, POs)

By digit:

- Numbers already applied (social security, budget #)
- For series with many records

Filing methods: By topic



- Each subject gets its own folder
- Good for diverse topics
- Folders tend to grow very large over time

Organizing records



- **Centralized** filing system
- **Decentralized** filing system
- **Hybrid** filing system

Organization: Centralized filing system



- **Single, central location**
- Majority of users have access to a majority of files
- Greater control over files
- No need for duplicate files
- Easier to maintain uniformity, consistency
- Requires less equipment and space for storage

Organization: Decentralized filing system



- **Different locations for different record series**
- Individuals have access to specific record series
- User is same person as creator, or can grant access
- Smaller chance of misfiling records
- Greater security and confidentiality
- Closer physical location to user

Organization: Hybrid filing system



Some series are central, some are decentralized

Emails are not automatically records



- “Email” does not automatically mean “record”
- **Content** determines whether email = record
- Don’t save all things for all time

Email management

1. Immediately delete non-work/junk.
2. Touch emails once; file them right away.
3. Create folders for non-public and personal emails.
4. Create folders for hot topics and specific projects.
5. Automate! Use rules or filters.
6. Use flags or categories to put things off until later.
7. Purge regularly: inbox, folders, sent, deleted items, etc.

Electronic records

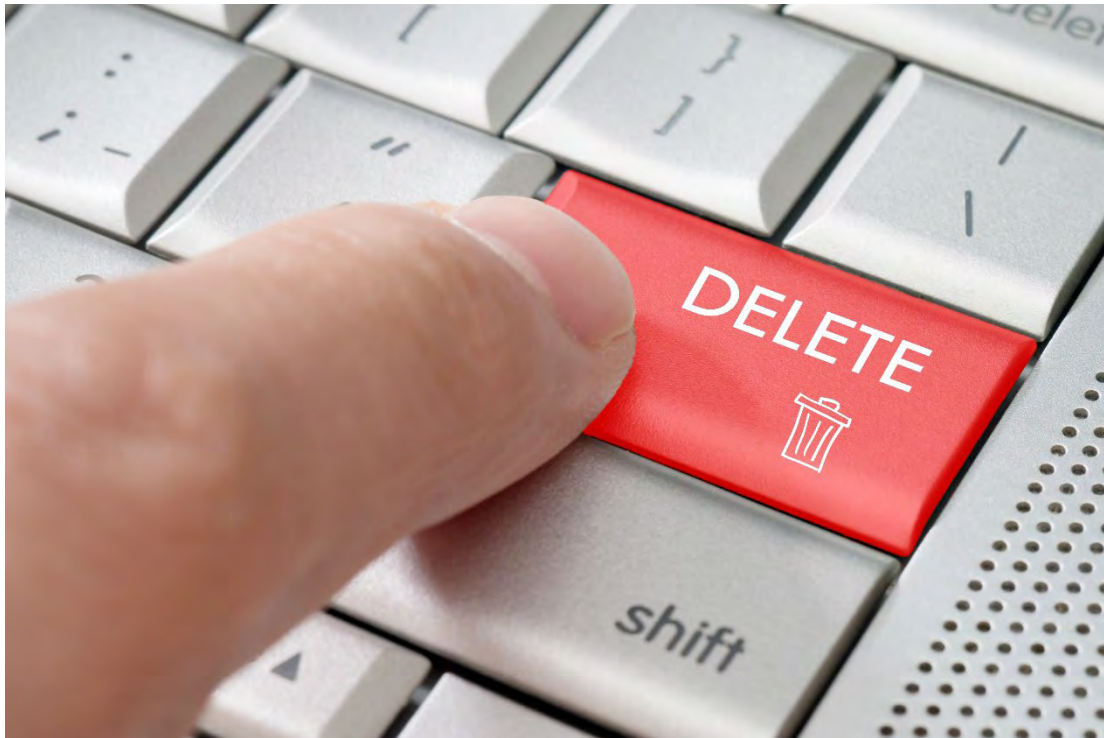


- Easy to [accidentally] duplicate by sharing, CCing, emailing, saving new versions...
- Vulnerable to undetected alteration, loss, unauthorized sharing

Electronic records management

- Keep drafts only until a final version is complete.
- If it's the only copy, it's the record.
- Delineate between records and reference documents.
- Keep convenience copies only as long as you need (and not longer than the record itself).
- Organize using the same principles as paper records.

Disposing of records



- End of schedule
+ not archival
= obsolete
- Purge obsolete records
regularly
- Dispose obsolete records
safely

Why dispose of records?

- Fewer files in the office
- Retrieving files is easier and less time-consuming
- More hands make for light work
- Aligns with records retention schedule
- Reduces risk of litigation loss
- Reduces risk of unfavorable audit

What can't I dispose of?



- Records under audit, lawsuit, information request (until resolution)
- Records without a retention schedule (unless permission of state panel)

Disposing records safely

- Shredding: Use a cross-cut shredder
- Hard drives: Sanitize
- Electronic: Delete **all** copies, everywhere



Protecting records



If **any** law or statute's criteria apply to your information, you must protect that information from accidental release.

Misconceptions about records, part 1

Misconceptions:

- Records retention isn't *my* job.
- Records management is where paper files go when I don't need them anymore.
- I don't use paper, so I don't need to worry about records.

Reality:

- Records retention is everyone's job.
- Records management involves a record's whole life cycle, not just the end.
- Most records aren't paper anymore, but are accessed and shared electronically.

Misconceptions about records, part 2

Misconceptions:

- I can't get rid of documents.
- These aren't official records; they're just the things I do.

Reality:

- Follow the retention schedule.
- Some routine activities are worth capturing in a records system.

Conclusion



Records management matters, and it starts with you.

Further resources or records retention

- **Your county administrator**
- **Minnesota State Archives (Minnesota Historical Society):**
www.mnhs.org/preserve/records/
- **MDH public health system consultants:**
www.health.mn.gov; search for “who is my public health system consultant”

Records retention webinar series

1. Records and information management
- 2. Records retention schedules**
3. Preserving and disposing of government records
4. Essential records management

Full webinar series: www.health.mn.gov; search for “records retention”



Thank you.

