

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Q. What if we have the same record in both paper and electronic formats?

A. You are required to only keep one version of a record. When you have more than one version, you will need to make a decision about which format will be the convenience copy. Make sure this decision is applied consistently to ensure file system integrity and usability. In order to ensure the integrity of your recordkeeping system, do not keep convenience copies longer than the record.

### Q. Why aren't there citations for every record series?

A. In Minnesota, all records are presumed to be public. However, there are a number of Minnesota statutes that specify requirements for protection of certain data or information. The citations are provided to help readers understand information protection requirements.

### Q. Why do some of the data classifications say the records are both public and not public?

A. Under Minnesota statutes, some records may need to be temporarily protected. Or, there may be parts of the record that are public, and parts that are not.

### Q. Is there a category for "confidential"?

A. Confidential is one component of Not Public (Not Public being the umbrella term). There is also private, protected, and nonpublic. By saying it is Not Public – we are indicating that we will take whatever actions are necessary to protect the data. The statutes/citations that describe the data practices protection categories are provided.

### Q. What happens when records are transferred to the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS)?

A. In a transfer, ownership of the records is transferred as well. MHS becomes the new owner of the record and will need to be contacted if access to the record is needed. Instructions of transferring records can be found on the [MHS website](#).

### Q. What does "Permanent" mean in the retention instructions column?

A. This means that the County is responsible for retaining those records forever. Should the records become unwanted or needed at a later time, then MHS must be contacted for storage or disposal permission.

### Q. Why don't I see "correspondence" or "email" as a record series?

A. Correspondence and email are methods of information delivery. The topics or subjects in these communications will indicate whether it is a record or not. Therefore, it's important to match those topics and subjects up to the appropriate record series to determine how long to retain them.

### Q. Why are "Administrative: Assessment and Planning" documents being kept until superseded?

A. These records tend to change fairly regularly and previous versions become outdated and lose their usefulness and value. When that happens they can be destroyed.

### Q. What if we need to keep records longer than the period of time specified on the schedule?

A. The retention periods on the schedule are minimum retention times. While you can keep records longer, it should only be for legitimate business reasons. Those reasons should be re-evaluated annually to see if they are still valid.

Q. What does “Vital” mean?

A. Vital records (also called essential records) are needed to re-establish operations in the first days of a disaster to the office or area. A system has to be set up to ensure that they are immediately available. The typical office has less than 5% of their records identified as “vital”.

Q. What does “Archival” mean?

A. Archival records are identified by MHS as having historical value. When the retention period has been met, these records must be transferred to MHS following the procedures on their website. For more information on this issue, contact the State Archivist at 651-259-3260.

Q. How should we handle it if there is a joint ownership of the records?

A. Joint “ownership” of records can be tricky. Administrative tasks like records management, should be specified in the agreement between all parties. It is a good idea to have a retention schedule so that everyone has an understanding of expectations. However, knowing that administrative tasks can run a gamut, it is often difficult to be specific about all administrative tasks. It may be more prudent to identify the deciding authority and a process for making decisions and communicating them.

If each party in a joint agreement has a different retention period for records it would be very difficult to manage disposition. For efficiency of operation and general practicality, all parties should function similarly. Each County or party should have their own retention schedule or adopt the general schedule for all other records that are not jointly managed.

Q. Do we have to follow the general records retention schedule?

The general retention schedule is a plan for managing governmental records. It can be adopted in its entirety by the County or individual parts can be adopted, or the County can create its own schedule. For more information, refer to the document entitled “[Introductions to the Schedule](#)” on the MHS web site.

Q. Do we follow the 2016 retention schedule or the old 1988 retention schedule?

General records retention schedule #16-095 entitled “Local Public Health Section” is a complete rewrite of the 1988 general records retention schedule labelled “Community Health/Nursing Services”. Because it supersedes an old schedule, most counties can start using it without any further action. However, some counties may require a board resolution to begin using it. Please check with your County Administrator or MHS for more information.

Q. Who else beside the owner can make disposition decisions?

A. Records are kept for business purposes or because there is law that specifies a requirement. The use of the records and the disposition decisions are the responsibility of the owner. No one except the Courts can order the destruction of records and when that happens the Courts are pretty specific about what is to be destroyed.

Q. Where can we find additional record retention resources?

A. The Minnesota Historical Society has many helpful resources on their website including a guidelines/standards section and a forms section. These can be found on the [MHS website](#). In addition, the Minnesota Department of Health has a series of four webinars including records management, retention schedules, proper destruction of records and disaster recovery for records. These can be found at:

[http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/opi/cd/training/events/2015/06\\_records.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/opi/cd/training/events/2015/06_records.html)