

# Records Management Introduction for State Employees

## Requirements and Responsibilities

For More Information:  
<http://publicrecordsboard.wi.gov> or  
Contact Your Agency Records Officer

### WHAT ARE WISCONSIN'S LAWS RELATED TO RECORDS?

- Wis. Stat. § 16.61(2)(b) defines "public records" for the purposes of records retention and disposition
- Wis. Stat. § 19.32(2) defines "records" for purposes of the records access and disclosure provisions of Wis. Stat. §§ 19.31-19.39 (known as the public records law or the open records law)

### WHY PUBLIC RECORDS MANAGEMENT?

- Improve effectiveness
- Comply with applicable legal requirements
- Document governmental activities
- Promote transparency in government
- Fulfill obligations to the public
- Minimize litigation risk
- Retrieve information faster
- Simplify decision making

### WHAT ARE YOUR PUBLIC RECORDS RESPONSIBILITIES?

- Recognize and manage public records created as part of your job duties
- Protect and save public records you create and use
- File paper and electronic documents so they can be readily accessed (use agency file plan if applicable)
- Maintain confidential and sensitive information appropriately
- Dispose of information that is not a public record
- Retain public records for the appropriate length of time
- Only dispose of public records in accordance with an approved Retention Disposition Authorization (RDA)
- Know where to go for help

### WHAT PUBLIC RECORDS MIGHT YOU HAVE?

- Business-related correspondence
- Program-related documentation
- Team, project, committee, or workgroup documentation
- Activity and project reports
- Training materials you have presented
- Work/information requests
- Operating procedures
- Calendars and schedules

***Wisconsin Public Records Board (PRB): Protecting the legal, financial and historical interests of the state in public records.***

## What is a Public Record?

### Created in the course of business

Examples: *correspondence and memos (paper and electronic), agreements, studies, reports*

### Received for action

Examples: *Information or public records requests, controlled correspondence*

### Mandated by statute or regulation

Examples: *statutorily required programs, administrative records, dockets, equal rights complaints*

## How Do I Manage My Public Records?

### Policies

- Learn your agency's Records Management policies
- Know which retention schedules (GRS or RDA) relate to your program records

### Filing

- File public records to allow for easy access over time
- Use your agency's approved filing system

### People

- Contact your agency's Records Officer or designated Records Coordinators.

*Note: Your agency may **only** legally dispose of records as approved by an authorized records schedule*

## What Qualities do Public Records Have?

### Document state activities

Examples: *calendars, meeting minutes, project reports*

### Support financial obligations or legal claims

Examples: *grants, contracts, litigation case files or audits*

### Communicate agency requirements

Examples: *guidance documents, policies, procedures*

## What is a Retention/Disposition Schedule?

Retention schedules:

- Group and describe related public records.
- Mandate **how long** public records are kept (retention).
- Mandate **what happens** to public records at the end of that time period (disposition).
- Are promulgated as policy via statewide [General Records Schedule \(GRS\)](#) or agency specific Record Disposition Authorization (RDA)

## Where Might Public Records Occur?

*Note: **Information content** determines what constitutes a public record and not the format in which the information is generated.*

### Email and Voicemail

**Social media: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.**

### Websites

### Videotapes/DVDs

### Webcasts/Webinars

### Calendars

### Documents, spreadsheets, databases

### Personal devices if used for agency business

### Audio recordings

### Maps and blueprints

## What is Not a Public Record?

### Reference materials and stock copies

Examples: *vendor catalogs, phone books, agency publications, blank forms*

### Duplicate copies

Examples: *copies of records (paper or electronic) for convenience or reference purposes only*

### Draft or working papers

Examples: *draft documents without substantive comments, rough notes, calculations.*  
*(It should be noted that some drafts are needed to support a decision trail or are otherwise required by an RDA)*

### General announcements and unsolicited email (internal or external)

Examples: *reminders received by all staff, listserv messages, spam*