

## RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE

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### Introduction

A good records management program has three major components:

1. A clearly written, widely disseminated, and regularly updated records management policy (see Records Management Policy Sample for a template)
2. Clear procedures to support the policy
3. Regularly scheduled training on the procedures

### Why are records management procedures important?

- Consistency
  - Allows everyone to do the same thing the same way
- Accountability
  - Provides something to fall back on in the event of a complicated records request, litigation, or audit
- Expediency
  - Improves the speed of records requests, retrieval, and re-filing
- Efficiency
  - Improves the use of staff time and storage space, controls the growth of records
- Compliance
  - Supports the requirement of all localities and agencies to have a records management program (Virginia Public Records Act [VPRA], Code of Virginia § 42.1-76 et seq.) and other federal, state, and local laws and mandates

### Development of Procedures to Support a Records Management Policy

The following points should be clearly communicated through written procedures and reinforced through regularly scheduled training:

- How to effectively manage, store, serve, and destroy nonpermanent records in all formats, including confidential and electronic
  - Appropriate storage conditions
  - Rules for access, especially for confidential records

- Procedures for retrieval and re-filing records
  - Instructions for responding to records requests
  - Instructions for records destruction (how often you purge, how purging is done, who can sign off on the forms, selected vendors and contact information, etc.)
- How to effectively manage, store, serve, and preserve permanent records, including confidential and electronic
  - Appropriate long-term storage conditions
  - Rules for access, especially for confidential records
  - Procedures for retrieval and re-filing records
  - Instructions for responding to records requests
  - Instructions for offering material to the Library of Virginia (if applicable)
- Documentation of decision-making processes
  - Why you choose to follow a particular series on a schedule
  - Clarification of cutoff events
- How to designate the copy of record and when it is appropriate to destroy copies
- How and when to complete a records survey
- How to locate appropriate retention schedules (both general and agency-specific)
- When and how to extend the retention of records relevant to legal matters, audits, investigations, etc.
- Whether it is necessary to document destruction of confidential non-records, and if so, how it will be done
- Rules for reformatting records (scanning/microfilming)
  - How to select records for reformatting
  - Procedures for preparing, sending, and storing reformatted records
- Instructions for documenting and dealing with noncompliance
- Rules for training staff (when it happens, who must attend, etc.)
- References, code citations, and internal operating procedures relating to records management