

Creating and Updating Agency Records Retention Schedules

A Guide for State Employees

Presented by the Indiana Archives and Records Administration (IARA)

WHY UPDATE RECORDS RETENTION SCHEDULES?

If you've taken our guide to Reading and Understanding Records Retention Schedules, or if you've used them in your own work, you'll know that retention schedules list the categories of records each agency creates or receives, and give instructions on how to comply with the appropriate public records laws for each type of record.

But these lists and instructions can't be static! Agencies, programs, and laws can change, so retention schedules and the record series they contain have to keep up.

If your agency starts creating a new type of record that's not covered by an existing retention schedule, it will be illegal to destroy or dispose of those records (under IC 5-15-5.1-14) until they are added to an approved schedule. If you don't find anything on your agency retention schedule or the State General Retention Schedule that covers your new program, then it's time to create a new Record Series!

If you stop creating an existing type of record, we want to remove the matching record series from your retention schedule so that it only contains those record types that actually exist!

In addition to adding and removing record series entirely, changes in law or agency procedures may mean that we need to update or "amend" existing series so that you can:

- Keep records for a longer or shorter period of time
- Transfer records to the Indiana Archives that weren't previously archival
- Transfer records to the Records Center that you used to store in your office
- Change format-specific instructions because you started a new imaging program
- Add or update confidentiality information
- Combine two similar record series whose records are now physically filed together
- Move a series to a different schedule because someone else now handles those records
- Change references to agency or program names
- Add or remove "typical contents" from the description

...among many other options.

GETTING STARTED

There are two ways for us to get that update rolling:

1. The Archives and Records Administration contacts your agency

- The Records Management division reviews each retention schedule every four years (unless a revision project is already in progress) to determine whether any obvious changes need to be made.
- An IARA Records Analyst then contacts your agency's Records Coordinator to let them know it's time for an update, sending a draft retention schedule with proposed changes to review. The Records Coordinator replies with a new draft (or notes) listing any additional changes that the agency has in mind. The revision project carries on from there!
- If IARA has no updates to propose, we'll still contact the Records Coordinator to find out if you do. If everyone thinks the schedule is good as-is, the Records Analyst will note that and drop it back into the cycle to be reviewed again in another four years.

OR

2. Your agency contacts IARA:

- Your Records Coordinator can contact the Records Management division at any time to propose a new update to your agency's schedule – even if it hasn't been four years. Even if it hasn't been four months. They can e-mail rmd@iara.in.gov, or contact a Records Analyst directly if they already know each other.
- If you're not the Records Coordinator, but you notice a change that needs to be made, ask your Coordinator to initiate a new update project with IARA.
- They may ask you to work on the project, if you're more familiar with the records in question – but you need to contact them first. They're your agency's official representative, and they need to be aware of any records-related activities.
- This is beneficial for you too! You may find out that there's already a revision project in the works, and your changes can be easily folded into it – or they may have even already been proposed.

THE DRAFTING PROCESS: HOW TO READ DRAFT RETENTION SCHEDULES

A draft is almost exactly like the official schedules that you usually work with, but it's marked DRAFT, and it contains **bold-text lines** requesting that the Oversight Committee on Public Records (OCPR) approve specific changes

like:

"Please add the following new item(s): "

This will be followed by **one or more proposed record series, which will have item numbers** (line numbers in the standard 1, 2, 3... counting order), **but no Record Series Numbers yet** (because Record Series Numbers are only assigned after the revision is fully completed and approved).

[Image of a Retention Schedule page containing three proposed new Record Series. The text of the Record Series themselves is unimportant in this context; the picture exists to illustrate that the proposed new Record Series have item numbers (7, 8, and 9) but no Record Series Numbers yet. Instead, the Record Series Number column contains only "new item" for each of the proposed new series.]

...or like:

"Please delete/deactivate/discontinue Record Series XYZ; "

- it is no longer created and no records remain
- it has been replaced by Record Series PDQ
- the records described were duplicates or other non-record materials

Record Series XYZ will have its Record Series Number (those last forever) **but will NOT have an item number**, because it's being deactivated, and thus doesn't get included in the count of items on the schedule.

[Image of a Retention Schedule page containing a Record Series proposed for deactivation. The text of the Record Series itself is unimportant in this context; the picture exists to illustrate that the Record Series to be deactivated has a Record Series Number (since it is an already-existent series) but no item number, since we're proposing to remove it from the Retention Schedule.]

...or like:

"Please amend the description (and/or retention) of Record Series ABC to read:"

[Image of a single Record Series being amended, showing the last-approved language on the top row, then a line reading "Please amend the description of Record Series 82-354 to read:" followed by a row containing the proposed new language, which contains a change to the title and description. The specific text of the Record Series is unimportant in this context; the image exists to illustrate the layout, and the fact that as an existing Record Series, it already has a Record Series Number, and as a series remaining on the Schedule, it also has an item number.]

This series has both a Record Series Number (because it's an already-existing series) **and an item number** (because it's remaining on the schedule).

Amendment requests deliberately list the record series twice: first the old version, as the Committee previously approved it, followed by the "please amend" line, then the proposed new wording.

THE DRAFTING PROCESS: WHAT INFORMATION WILL IARA NEED ON MY DRAFTS?

Here's what the IARA Records Analyst will need to know for each proposed update:

1. **Record Series Number:** If you're proposing a new series, it won't have one yet (they're assigned by IARA after final approval) but for any other updates, we need to know which item is being changed!
2. **Retention Schedule:** Some agencies have separate schedules for different divisions; your Records Analyst will need to know which one is being updated. You can find a list of them on IARA's website, under State Agency Retention Schedules.
3. **Reason for removing a series from the schedule:** This is required on the draft as part of the formal approval process. Those reasons are usually pretty simple: "We're no longer creating it and there aren't any pre-existing records left" or "These records are now covered under Record Series ABC instead of this one."
4. **Title and Description Language/Changes:** Certain retention schedule language is formalized, but title and description are largely based on your agency's proposals. IARA staff will usually only streamline or clarify the wording, if necessary.
5. **Retention Instructions/Changes:** Where, how long, and in what format your records should be kept. You don't need to provide the formal wording, just a plain language description of what should happen; your Records Analyst will do the translating into Retention Schedule Speak!
6. **Legal Citations/Changes:** Any laws that you or your agency legal staff can identify which affect confidentiality, or provide a basis for the proposed retention period. If a cited law has been updated, replaced, or repealed, let IARA staff know that so they can update the citation (and possibly the retention period) accordingly.

THE DRAFTING PROCESS: HOW TO EDIT DRAFTS

DO:

1. **Do add your comments/edits using the Comment button on MS Word's Review tab.** Select the text you want to comment about, then click the Comment button and enter your notes or proposed new language in the comment field.

2. **Do give your updated draft file a new number** (but not a new name) before you send it back to IARA:

IARA's file: familyandsocialserviceadmin-2019-draft-01.docx

Your file: familyandsocialserviceadmin-2019-draft-02.docx

DON'T:

1. **Don't use the Track Changes function.** (The table format of Retention Schedules turns Track Changes into an unreadable mess.)
2. **Don't add, change, remove, or strike through any original text.** Instead, attach a New Comment describing the changes you want made.
3. **Don't delete a Record Series you'd like deactivated.** Those remain on the draft - accompanied by a request to deactivate them - until after Oversight Committee approval.
4. **Don't request that a series be deactivated without also noting *why*.**
5. **Don't assign Record Series Numbers to proposed new items.** Those are assigned by the Records Analyst after Oversight Committee approval.
6. **Don't stress about the process** – your IARA Records Analyst will be there to help and answer questions, every step of the way!

STEP BY STEP

Revision & Review

1. Your IARA Records Analyst and any specialists whose expertise may help (such as our Electronic Records Archivist) will discuss the updates with your staff.
2. The Analyst sends a Microsoft Word draft with proposed revisions and any associated questions to your Records Coordinator, or someone they've designated on your staff.
3. Your staff reviews the draft, then sends a new version to IARA with suggestions for further change (using inserted comments) or just tells the Analyst that the current draft is good as-is.
4. Further drafts are traded back and forth until everyone agrees on a final version, OR we move directly on to Step 5.
5. The Analyst submits the draft to IARA's Administration Team for review.
6. If the team requests changes, the draft goes back to Step 2. If it's approved as-is, we're on to Step 7!

Final Approval

7. A PDF final draft is e-mailed to the Records Coordinator which contains a routing/cover sheet for your agency head to digitally sign.
8. The Records Coordinator e-mails the E-signed PDF back to the Records Analyst.
9. The State Board of Accounts also reviews and signs it.
10. The schedule is placed on the agenda for the monthly meeting of the Oversight Committee on Public Records (OCPR), and the Records Coordinator is notified.
11. If the Committee doesn't approve, the analyst contacts the Records Coordinator about any requested changes, and a new draft is submitted at the next month's meeting. (It doesn't have to go back through steps 5 to 10.)
12. If the schedule is approved, a formal, non-draft version will be e-mailed to the Records Coordinator in PDF form. This is your new official retention schedule!

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER APPROVAL?

For records that you still have in your agency: the new retention rules apply. So, for instance, if you've shortened the retention period and the records you have are now eligible for transfer or destruction, you're cleared to begin that process!

For records stored at the Records Center: the new retention rules also apply. Records Center staff will adjust the intended date of destruction or transfer to the Indiana Archives to match the changes approved in your retention schedule.

For records already transferred to the Indiana Archives: the rules that were in place *at the time of transfer* apply. If a Record Series was once scheduled for transfer to the Archives, but now is scheduled for destruction, records that are already at the Archives will remain there.



[Image of a 3-d cartoon figure in a red cape with an S logo on the chest, and the word "YOU" in red beneath the logo. This figure is holding a copy of an "APPROVED!" retention schedule.]

Thank you

for taking our course on

Creating and Updating Agency Records Retention Schedules.

For more in-depth information (including additional training options),
please visit our website at
iara.IN.gov.