

READING AND UNDERSTANDING RECORDS RETENTION SCHEDULES A GUIDE FOR STATE EMPLOYEES



WHAT IS A RECORDS RETENTION SCHEDULE?

All government records are subject to state and federal laws on how long we have to keep them, who can access them, and what happens to them afterward.

Retention schedules list the categories of records each agency creates or receives. Records with the same subject matter and legal requirements are grouped into the same category.

Those categories are called **record series**, and each record series contains simple instructions on how to comply with the appropriate public records laws for that type of record.

Retention Schedule

ITEM #	RECORD SERIES NUMBER	TITLE/DESCRIPTION	RETENTION INSTRUCTIONS
1	74-132	CONTINUING EDUCATION Documentation of a licensee's completion of required professional credit hours for the current renewal period, on SF 999988 or equivalent. May be submitted in paper or electronic format. Access to these records may be affected by IC 38-15-2(a). Retention based on 58 CFR 12.5(f) and 12.8.	TRANSFER paper records to the RECORDS CENTER after renewal date. DESTROY after an additional four (4) years in the RECORDS CENTER. DELETE electronic records four (4) years after renewal date.
2	74-133	WITHDRAWN APPLICATIONS License applications which have been withdrawn by the applicant before the close of the official review period, and associated correspondence.	DESTROY three (3) years after date of withdrawal correspondence.
3	74-134	DEPED SURVEYS Submitted annually to the U.S. Department of Education per 9800 USC 380. Original PDF form is uploaded to USDEPED online database, which is permanent and publically-accessible.	DELETE original PDF file after electronic confirmation of receipt by U.S. Department of Education.



Record Series

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THE TWO TYPES OF RETENTION SCHEDULE

Agency-Specific Schedules: The Archives and Records Administration works with each state agency to publish retention schedules for their unique records: those that no other agency creates or receives.

Depending on organizational needs, an agency may have only one agency-specific schedule, or it may have a number of separate schedules that each cover a different division.

The General Retention Schedule: This schedule is created and updated by the Archives and Records Administration with input from many agencies, and covers broad record types produced by all agencies.

Agency-Specific Record Series

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General Retention Schedule Record Series

RECORD SERIES NUMBER	TITLE/DESCRIPTION	RETENTION INSTRUCTIONS
<u>GRADM-1</u>	MINUTES Official minutes of any state agency, board, commission, or of any division. This is a critical record. Retention based on IC 5-15-5.1-5(a)(9), and IC 5-15-5.1-12.	TRANSFER to the State Archives five (5) years after the end of the calendar year of the meeting. The State Archives should MICROFILM according to 60 IAC 2 as soon as possible after receipt. TRANSFER original negative to the State Archives vault for permanent archival retention, as well as a duplicate roll for reference use. Hard copy records may be destroyed at the discretion of the State Archives after verification of microfilm for completeness and legibility.



WHAT'S IN A RECORD SERIES?

In addition to temporary item/line numbers that vary depending on when (or if) a retention schedule was printed out, each record series contains three main sections:

1. Record Series Number
2. Title/Description
3. Retention Instructions

The labels may vary depending on the age of the retention schedule or when it was last updated, but the contents remain the same.

Let's examine those sections more closely: what's contained in each, and how to use that information!

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WHAT'S IN A RECORD SERIES?

SECTION 1: RECORD SERIES NUMBER

The **Record Series Number** (abbreviated as RS # or just RS) is a unique, permanent identification number, assigned when the series is first approved.

It's used when you store records in boxes, film, scan, transfer, or destroy them, and it's the main way to identify agency records within the catalogs of the State Records Center and Indiana Archives.

For **Agency-specific** series, the Record Series Number acts as a combination of birthdate and social security number for the series:

In 1974, the 132nd series approved would have been RS# 74-132.

General Retention Schedule numbers indicate the broad record type and where the series falls in it:

In the **General Retention/ACCOUNTING** Records category, the 3rd series listed is **GRACC-3**.

RECORD
SERIES
NUMBER

74-132

TITLE/DESCRIPTION

CONTINUING EDUCATION
Documentation of a licensee's completion of required professional credit hours for the current renewal period, on SF 999988 or equivalent. May be submitted in paper or electronic format.

Access to these records may be affected by IC 38-15-2(a). Retention based on 58 CFR 12.5(f) and 12.8.

RETENTION INSTRUCTIONS

TRANSFER paper records to the RECORDS CENTER after renewal date.

DESTROY after an additional four (4) years in the RECORDS CENTER.

DELETE electronic records four (4) years after renewal date.



WHAT'S IN A RECORD SERIES?

SECTION 2: TITLE/DESCRIPTION

The formal **Record Series Title** is NOT permanent; it can be updated as needed whenever an agency works with IARA to revise its retention schedule.

It may or may not be unique: many agencies might use a title such as "Client Folders" to describe a completely different set of records with completely different legal requirements, depending on who those clients are, and what services the agency provides.

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What a Record Series Title *should* be is

- As brief as possible – it needs to fit on those box labels and forms!
- As descriptive as possible within that length – you should be able to glance at a box label and have some idea of what's in there without having to research it in the retention schedule!



WHAT'S IN A RECORD SERIES?

SECTION 2: TITLE/DESCRIPTION

The **Description** is a **brief synopsis** of the type of information covered by the record series.

It usually mentions:

- 📁 government programs the records are part of
- 📁 who sends the records to the agency
- 📁 why they're created or treated in a certain way
- 📁 the different document or data types that may show up in the file

More specifically, you're likely to find...

(see next page)

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WHAT'S IN A RECORD SERIES?

SECTION 2: TITLE/DESCRIPTION

contains...

A simple **narrative explanation**.

The length of this may vary, but the goal is to make it as brief and easy to understand as possible.

Your schedule may also be used by

- 📁 new staff (or just new to your program)
- 📁 employees in other divisions and agencies, trying to weed out the series that *don't* cover their documents
- 📁 regular citizens who want to know how we're preserving their records

So when writing record series, we try to avoid both wordy legal definitions and internal jargon that's only familiar to employees who work closely with the records or program.

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WHAT'S IN A RECORD SERIES?

SECTION 2: TITLE/DESCRIPTION

contains...

Listings of commonly found **State or Federal forms** so that people searching for those numbers or titles can find the record series that explains what to do with them.

Just because one form is referenced specifically and another may not be, don't assume the second one isn't covered by the record series.

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This is true of *anything* you don't find listed:

A form, report or document doesn't need to be mentioned explicitly, as long as the overall description covers the subject matter.



WHAT'S IN A RECORD SERIES?

SECTION 2: TITLE/DESCRIPTION

contains...

If relevant, the **format or media** in which the records are most commonly created or stored.

Confidentiality, retention lengths, and final dispositions are the same regardless of format, but where you store records and how to make sure they last for the full retention period may differ.

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If the listed instructions don't address the format you've got, follow these rules of thumb:

- Unless specifically instructed, the only format you should send to the Records Center is paper. Store electronic records and other formats in your agency until their final disposition point.
- EVERY format must go to the Indiana Archives if the record series lists that as the final disposition.



WHAT'S IN A RECORD SERIES?

SECTION 2: TITLE/DESCRIPTION

contains...

Any **State or Federal legal citations** (or other government publications)

that affect

📁 **public access** to the records:

so that both citizens and state employees will be aware that some or all parts of the record might be **confidential**, and be able to seek out the relevant laws to learn the details.

📁 the **retention instructions**:

so that those curious about *why* we do certain things with this type of information can read the law and find out. If there is no retention-related citation, the retention period was assigned based on agency or programmatic needs.

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Access to these records may be affected by IC 38-15-2(a). Retention based on 58 CFR 12.5(f) and 12.8.

WHAT'S IN A RECORD SERIES?

SECTION 3: RETENTION INSTRUCTIONS

Also known as Retention and Disposition, this section is the nitty gritty of a record series, and what most readers of retention schedules want to find: the details on **what the agency must do with the covered records.**

Again, the instructions are written as briefly and straightforwardly as possible (though specific legal or business phrases are required in certain situations), so that

- 📁 all employees will be able to understand what they need to do to fulfill their program and legal requirements toward the records
- 📁 no records are accidentally disposed of improperly, or too soon

These instructions may include...

RECORD SERIES NUMBER	TITLE/DESCRIPTION	RETENTION INSTRUCTIONS
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WHAT'S IN A RECORD SERIES?

SECTION 3: RETENTION PERIOD

contains...

Format conversion instructions:

- Whether – and when – to **image (scan) or microfilm** original paper records, or convert electronic records to **Computer Output Microfilm** (also known as COM).
- What to do with both sets of records after the conversion.

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We've temporarily changed the instructions for paper records in our fictional record series example above, to show how it would read if a format conversion to microfilm were required.

WHAT'S IN A RECORD SERIES?

SECTION 3: RETENTION PERIOD

contains...

A description of

📁 **where to store paper records** while your agency still owns them (if you're not keeping them within your own offices, which is the default situation)

📁 **when to transfer them to that storage location.**

If you end up keeping records in your office *past* the date when they should have been sent to the Records Center:

- 📁 **If the final disposition date has not yet passed**, send the records on to the Records Center when you're ready. The Records Center staff won't keep them longer because they arrived late; the storage time will be adjusted so that the total retention period remains the same.
- 📁 **If the records have reached their final disposition date already**: skip the Records Center entirely. Either destroy the records or transfer them directly to the Indiana Archives, whichever is indicated in the record series.

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WHAT'S IN A RECORD SERIES?

SECTION 3: RETENTION PERIOD

contains...

Information on **how long the records need to remain**

 in various locations

and/or

 in the agency's ownership before their final disposition.

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In our example above, the record series addresses how long paper records must remain in the Records Center, and how long electronic records must remain in the agency.

The total (4 years) is the same, because laws about retention periods don't change just because the record format changes!



WHAT'S IN A RECORD SERIES?

SECTION 3: RETENTION PERIOD

contains...

What finally happens to your records after all of their travels and storage are over:

destruction

-  by the agency if you're storing your own records
-  by the Records Center if the records are stored there, or if you request courtesy destruction service from their staff

or

transfer of records – and their ownership – to the Indiana Archives:

Records with potential historical significance will be scheduled for Indiana Archives transfer, where the Archivists may preserve them exactly as received, or may weed, sample, and evaluate the records to retain only those items with permanent value in the collections.

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APPLYING THE RETENTION SCHEDULE

RETENTION PERIODS may contain references to different types of years, especially if it's been a while since the Retention Schedule was revised. Here's how to calculate when to dispose of such records, with an example of each type.

September 2018						
SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

Year: 12 full months. **DESTROY one year after trigger event:** If the trigger event happens in August, 2017, you can destroy the records in September of 2018.

Calendar Year: January 1 through December 31. **DESTROY one calendar year after trigger event:** If the trigger event happens in August, 2017, the one calendar year doesn't start until January of 2018. You can destroy the records in February of 2019.

Fiscal Year or State Fiscal Year: July 1 through the following June 30. **DESTROY one fiscal year after trigger event:** If the trigger event happens in August, 2017, the one state fiscal year doesn't start until July of 2018. You can destroy the records in August of 2019.

Federal Fiscal Year: October 1 through the following September 30. **DESTROY one federal fiscal year after trigger event:** If the trigger event happens in August, 2017, the one federal fiscal year doesn't start until October of 2017. You can destroy the records in November of 2018.

Current preferred retention schedule language does not count in Calendar, Fiscal, and Federal Fiscal Years. Instead, only "Year" is used, and the other information becomes part of the trigger event for when you start counting the years. For example, instead of "DESTROY two fiscal years after file closure," the instructions would read, "DESTROY two years after the end of the fiscal year of file closure."



LANGUAGE, TERMS AND PHRASES

While we try to write as plainly as possible, some of the language used on retention schedules may still be a bit obscure, while other words are familiar enough, but put together in a way that doesn't immediately make sense if you're not used to records management. Here's a brief guide to help clear things up!



LANGUAGE, TERMS AND PHRASES

TRANSFER

Most often used to mean:

You should **move the records from their current location** – usually within your agency – to the Records Center, the Indiana Archives, or some other agency or office.



The instructions for how to *accomplish* that transfer vary, and are listed in various handbooks on the IARA website; the retention schedule won't go into that level of detail.

In some rare cases:

You may find a phrase like "If XYZ happens, TRANSFER to Record Series 68-272."

In that situation, TRANSFER means that because certain criteria (XYZ) have been met, **these records should now be considered to fall under a *different* record series**, and you should follow the retention instructions for that other series.




LANGUAGE, TERMS AND PHRASES


DESTROY or DELETE:

Their meaning is probably pretty obvious, but there are two additional things worth knowing about these words:



 While one is most commonly associated with physical objects, and the other with data, **they mean exactly the same thing.**

If either of those words is present, you have permission to get rid of the information, no matter what format it's in.

 **If the retention schedule doesn't specifically tell you HOW to destroy/delete the records, then it's up to you.** (Though we'd certainly prefer you choose the most environmentally friendly option available!)

If there's a public access/confidentiality note in the description, though, then the information has to be disposed of **confidentially** – in a way that no one who isn't authorized to access it will have the chance to gain access or re-create it.



LANGUAGE, TERMS AND PHRASES

IMAGE or SCAN

These mean the same thing: use a scanner to create electronic images of original paper documents, saving them either as TIF image files, or in one of several PDF file options.

This may be done by your agency, by an outside vendor, or by IARA's Imaging and Microfilm Lab, which is usually the most cost-effective option for any imaging not performed by your own staff.

"...according to IARA standards." Minimum imaging standards can be found in [Imaging and public records: Basic questions and answers for government officials](#) in the Publications section of the IARA website.

You can also find out more detailed information by contacting IARA's Electronic Records staff to discuss the best options for the particular record type you're working with.



LANGUAGE, TERMS AND PHRASES

MICROFILM

Copy original records to microfilm format.

(Some record series may refer to *microfiche*. This is still microfilm. Fiche is just a specific way of printing and cutting the film.)

Microfilming may be performed by your agency (though most state agencies don't have the equipment), or by IARA's Imaging and Microfilm Lab.

"...according to 60 IAC 2." This is the Indiana Administrative Code that lists the minimum quality standards for government microfilm.






"after verification of microfilm for completeness and legibility." This is the quality control that your agency must perform once you receive your completed microfilm rolls, before you can destroy any paper originals. The standards for this are also in 60 IAC 2, and you confirm that the film has been verified by signing a State Form 42775, Certificate of Compliance/Verification.



LANGUAGE, TERMS AND PHRASES

CONFIDENTIAL

Depending on the age of the record series you're working with, you may find this stated in a number of different ways:

-  **Confidential**
-  **Partially confidential**
-  **Confidential at the discretion of a public agency**
-  **Access to these records may be affected by...**
-  **Disclosure of these records may be affected by...**

...followed by a state or federal legal citation.

For an employee reading the retention schedule, these all mean basically the same thing: these records, or some part of these records, contain information that not everyone is allowed to access.

The details on who *is* allowed to access the records, which parts might be open to everyone, any time limit on the confidentiality, and the reasons for it, can be found by reading the listed legal citation in its source publication. (Indiana Code, US Code, etc.)



LANGUAGE, TERMS AND PHRASES

AUDIT

Unless another type of audit is specifically mentioned, this refers to the audits performed by the Indiana State Board of Accounts.

You'll find these references in the instructions for when to transfer or destroy certain records, and they'll usually be phrased like this: "...after receipt of STATE BOARD OF ACCOUNTS Audit Report and satisfaction of unsettled charges."

Here's how to verify that you've fulfilled this requirement:

1. Visit the SBOA Audit Report Database (<https://secure.in.gov/apps/sboa/audit-reports/>)
2. In the "SEARCH" text box, type "Federal Single."
3. In the "UNIT TYPE" drop-down box, choose "State."
4. Leave everything else blank.
5. Click the SEARCH button.
6. In the results, click the arrow next to "End Date" to sort by that column.
7. Click the same arrow again to bring the most recent to the top.
8. Find the most recent end date whose Audit Type is "Federal Single."
9. If your records date is ON OR BEFORE that End Date, you're good to go!



LANGUAGE, TERMS AND PHRASES

CRITICAL RECORD

On a very select number of record series, you'll find the phrase **"This is a critical record"** in the description.

This refers to records that are considered critical to the running or re-building of state government in an emergency situation.

Critical records are determined by IARA (with input from your agency) during a retention schedule's development, and require special consideration when it comes to formats and preservation.



LANGUAGE, TERMS AND PHRASES

EVALUATION, SAMPLING or WEEDING

Most record series scheduled for transfer to the Indiana Archives will contain language like "for EVALUATION, SAMPLING and WEEDING pursuant to archival principles."



This just means that the archivists are authorized to review the contents of the records transferred to them, and keep for the permanent collections only those parts that they determine to have lasting value.

Those "archival principles" consist of their own experience and education, best practices in the archival profession, and any processing guides that have already been created for that record type by Indiana Archives staff.





LANGUAGE, TERMS AND PHRASES

Terms used in the Retention Schedule Search

While you're not likely to find these in a printed retention schedule, they may come up if you're using IARA's online search to find and read your record series information.



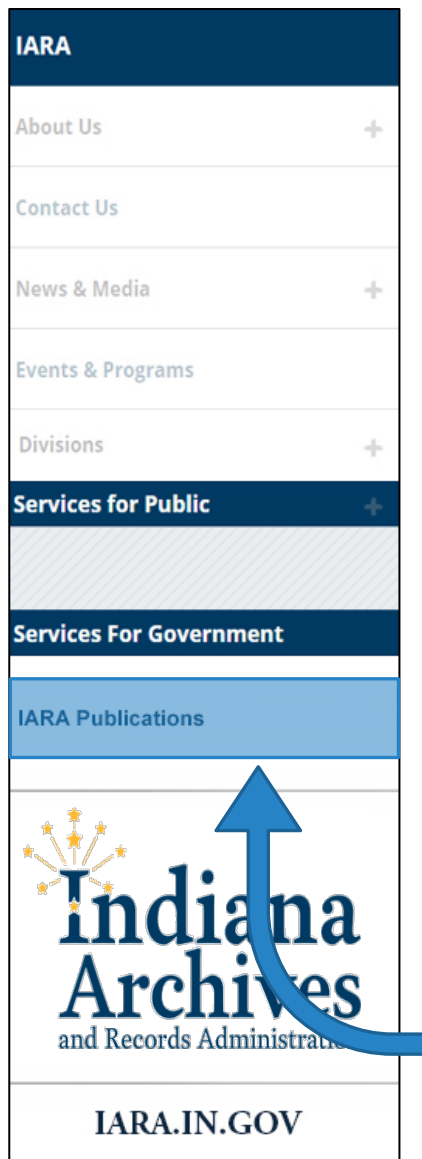
Discontinued series: This is a record series that is no longer authorized for use. Either the agency no longer creates the record type, or the records are now covered under a different record series. Discontinued series will not appear on printed retention schedules, but are available in the online search, so that

-  you can research them for historical purposes
-  you can access record series information on permanent Indiana Archives holdings that were transferred there while the Discontinued series was still active

Status note: If present, this note will let you know when a series was discontinued, why, and which other record series (if any) to use in place of it.

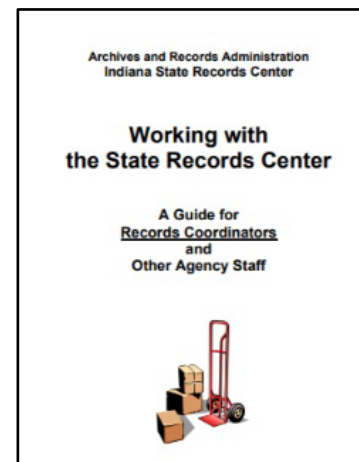
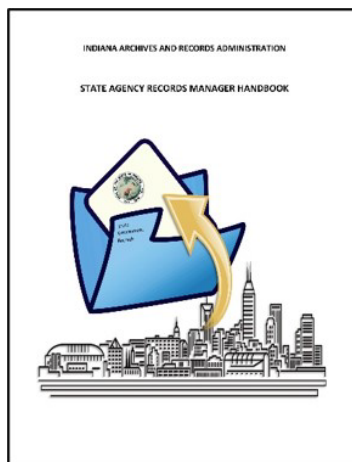


FOR MORE INFORMATION



If you have questions about reading and using records retention schedules that aren't covered here, please let us know! IARA's Records Management division will be happy to either answer them, or get you in touch with the best person or division to provide that information. You can reach us by e-mail at RMD@iara.in.gov.

You can also find more detailed information on our [Publications](#) page. Especially useful are the Records Manager and Records Center handbooks, the Imaging publication mentioned earlier, and the Guide to Proper Records Destruction.





STATE AGENCY RECORDS RETENTION AND DISPOSITION SCHEDULE

Agency: Archives and Records Administration		Division: State Imaging and Microfilm Laboratory	
ITEM NO.	RECORD SERIES	TITLE/DESCRIPTION <i>(This Retention Schedule is approved on a space-available basis)</i>	RETENTION PERIOD
1	82-402	MICROFILMING LOGS, SF 36051 This log is the documentation of what is contained on all rolls filmed by the Archives and Records Administration.	DESTROY when all corresponding microfilm is destroyed.
2	82-404	RECORD OF MICROFILM START AND CERTIFICATE OF MICROFILMING, SF 63 AND SF 40724 These contain information on what is on each roll of film and the authority for microfilming. These forms are placed at the beginning and end of each roll of microfilm.	DESTROY upon completion of each roll of microfilm.
3	84-54	LOG OF MICROFILM PROCESSING, SF 23562 This log is the record of all microfilm processed by the State Imaging and Microfilm Laboratory staff of the Archives and Records Administration. Information recorded consists of the processing date, roll number, type of record, density and any problems noticed on the microfilm.	MICROFILM according to 60 IAC 2 on receipt of sufficient volume to complete a roll. DESTROY hard copy after verification of microfilm for completeness and legibility. TRANSFER original negative roll to the STATE ARCHIVES for permanent archival retention.

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