Veterans Health Administration
Research & Development
Improving Veterans' Lives — www.research.va.gov

GUIDANCE ON INDENTIFYING AND MANAGING RECORDS

The goal of recordkeeping is to clearly document how and why an action took place without creating or maintaining any extra documentation that is not necessary for that purpose.

The table below provides general guidance and is not intended to be exhaustive. There will always be exceptions and individual circumstances where files may appear to have transitory value but because of the way they are used they should be retained as official records. When in doubt, preserve as an official record.

RECORDED INFORMATION	DECLARATION	DISPOSITION
Created or received in the course of conducting agency business AND the following attributes: • Appropriate for preservation because it is evidence of agency activities or has sufficient informational value to warrant preservation • Documents formulation, execution, decisions and actions • Contains unique or substantive information not captured elsewhere • Mission-critical agency activities such as policy, regulatory, or budget development may require more complete records	Federal Record (Long-term interest or archival value)	Preserve per retention requirements[1] (See VHA RCS 10-1[2] and GRS[3])
Created or received in the course of conducting agency business AND the following attributes: • Drafts and working files that do not document significant steps in the development of a final version or provide evidence of decisions or precedents, and are not needed to track development progress • Routine requests for information which have no further value after the information is received or provided • Transmittal notices that do not contain substantive information or are not required as evidence of receipt • Information-only notices (e.g., holiday events, campaign materials, etc.)	Federal Record (Short-term interest or transitory value)	Destroy when no longer needed (GRS 23, item 7)
Created or received in the course of conducting agency business AND the following attributes: • Duplicate copy maintained solely for convenience of reference and not needed to document program activities • Provides information but not connected to agency transaction • Library materials	Non-record	Destroy when no longer needed
Does not relate to or have any effect upon the conduct of agency business	Personal Papers	File separately from records

[1] All records must be scheduled (retention and disposition instructions) and approved by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). Records that are unscheduled cannot be destroyed until retention and disposition instructions are approved by NARA.
[2] Veterans Health Administration Records Control Schedule 10-1.
[3] General Records Schedule (issued by NARA).

Received from ORD 3/13/2014