

Instructions for Completing the Records Survey (RM-19 Form)

Updated: March 2014

The purpose of the records survey is to identify and quantify all records created and maintained by your agency in order to create a specific records retention and disposition schedule. Without an accurate, functioning records retention and disposition schedule, a state agency, locality, or other political subdivision (hereafter referred to as “agency,” cannot legally destroy records in its possession. The survey identifies and defines a set of records, any restrictions to access, the length of time those documents must be retained, and the manner of disposition. Completing the survey will help your analyst identify records that are still in active use, records that have become inactive and may be transferred to less expensive storage facilities, essential records that need off-site security backup, historically valuable records that can be transferred to the Library of Virginia’s Archives, and records that no longer need to be retained.

Multiple records may be grouped on the survey as a “records series.” A records series is a group of records normally used or filed as a unit that relate to a particular subject or result from the same activity. An easy way to understand the records series concept is to consider the progression of information units in records management. The smallest unit is the individual page or document. The next largest unit is the file, which consists of related documents. Finally, the records series—groups of related files—is the largest unit and is the level at which records surveys are performed.

According to the [Virginia Public Records Act](#) (*Code of Virginia*, §42.1-76 et seq.), a public record is defined as “recorded information that documents a transaction or activity by or with any public officer, agency or employee of an agency,” regardless of physical form or characteristic. Therefore, records surveys incorporate records produced in all media types including, but not limited to, paper and electronic records, CDs, magnetic tapes, microfilm, maps, and drawings. A records series may incorporate multiple formats (e.g., paper files and a database).

Certain kinds of materials maintained by agencies are not considered records. These materials include blank forms, publications used for reference purposes, and convenience copies of documents produced solely for ease of reference. Materials identified as non-records should not be included in the records survey. Do not submit a RM-19 Form for records that are already identified on a state agency general schedule.

All RM-19 forms must be completed as a Word document and e-mailed in that format as an attachment to your assigned records analyst.

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- 1-3 **Agency, Division/Department, Section/Sub-Unit:** Provide the full name of the agency that maintains the records described in the survey. Also provide the full name of the division/department and section/sub-unit that creates, uses, and maintains the records series, if applicable. Do not use abbreviations or acronyms.
- 4-6 **Contact Person, Telephone Number and Extension, E-mail Address:** Provide the name, telephone number (including the extension, if applicable), and e-mail address of the individual knowledgeable about the records series. This person does not need to be a records officer, but will most likely be the individual completing the form.
- 7 **Records Series Title:** Determine a specific, descriptive title for the records series. Titles should identify the subject and/or function of the records. Clarify all acronyms on the first usage.
- 8a, b **Schedule and Series Status:** Indicate whether the purpose of the records survey is to update an existing records series or to create a new series and whether the series is currently assigned to a retention schedule or will be placed on a new schedule. If updating a records series, provide the existing retention schedule and records series numbers in the space provided.
- 9 **Date Range of Records:** Provide the dates of the records from the earliest to the most recent, regardless of their location. Use "ca." for circa, meaning "approximately," when exact dates cannot be determined.
- 10 **Series Still in Use?** Indicate whether or not the series is still in use. A series that is no longer active will be made defunct.
- 11 **Description:** Describe the purpose of the records series, indicating what actions are documented by the series, how the actions relate to the office and its operation, who creates the records, and who uses the records. Include a broad list of the types of documents in a series (forms, applications, reports, notes, studies, etc.) and describe the nature of the information recorded in the documents. This concise description should be clear to those unfamiliar with the operation documented by the records. Avoid technical jargon or unexplained abbreviations. If the proposal is to defunct multiple series and combine them into this records series, list all of the series numbers and titles to be made defunct in this section, along with the reason(s) for that decision.
- 12 **File Arrangement:** Describe the organization of the records. Check all descriptions that apply and clarify where necessary. For example:
- Alphabetically by agency name
 - Chronologically by year of graduation, then alphabetically by student name
 - Numerically by tax parcel number, then by document type (blueprints, permits, specifications)
- 13 **Records Cutoff By:** To "cutoff" records means to break, or end them at regular intervals to permit their disposal or transfer in complete blocks. Typically, the cutoff is used to separate active from inactive records. Indicate how often the records are cutoff by selecting one option from the dropdown list provided. If there is no file cutoff, the series is continuous and will be difficult to manage non-permanent retention.
- 14 **Frequency of Use:** Determining frequency of use helps to establish when a records series transitions from active to less active or inactive. Rate the frequency of use of the records series by selecting one of four categories from the dropdown list: daily, weekly, monthly, or less often.
- 15 **Are These Essential Records?** Essential records contain information required by an agency to function or to reestablish operations immediately in the event of a disaster. If records are essential, they may have special storage or reformatting considerations.
- Examples of essential records are current tax receipts, ongoing contracts, payrolls, and land or student records.
- 16 **Records Medium:** A particular records series may include multiple formats. Paper records can include loose documents, bound volumes, photographs, architectural drawings, and maps. Electronic records can include word-processed files, databases, electronic spreadsheets, geographic information system (GIS) records, and

computer-aided design (CAD) records. Audiovisual records can include information stored on audio and video tapes, compact discs (CDs), and digital video discs (DVDs).

In the explanation, please provide further details regarding the size of the paper, type of microform, and formats and storage media for electronic or audiovisual media.

- 17 **Annual Accumulation of Records in All Locations:** Provide an estimate of the volume of records created, received, and retained in the course of a year. Express the approximate volume of records in cubic feet for paper, audiovisual, microform, and cartographic records. Electronic records should be measured in bytes (kilobytes, megabytes, gigabytes, or terabytes).

Use the [Volume Estimation Table](#) to determine the volume of records. To determine size for electronic records, right-click on the file or folder and choose "Properties" and then locate Size under the "General" tab.

- 18 **Total Accumulation of Records in All Locations:** Provide an estimate of the total volume of records, from the earliest to the most recent, in all storage locations. Use the same methods for estimating volume as described above.

- 19 **Cite any authority governing creation, management, retention, and/or disposition of series:** Note any agency, state, or federal law, regulation, or policy and attach, or include a link to, the appropriate citation(s). For example, include state or federal laws or regulations that:

- Mandate the creation of the series
- Authorize the activity that results in the creation of the activity
- Require the retention of the series for a specific period of time
- Require a particular disposal method

- 20 **Access to Records:** Indicate whether any state or federal regulations restrict access to the records. For example:

- Government Data Collection and Dissemination Practices Act (*Code of Virginia*, §2.2-3800)
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
- Freedom of Information Act (*Code of Virginia*, §2.2-3700 et seq.). For FOIA exemptions please include the specific provision (e.g., 2.2-3705.7(1)).

- 21 **Recommended Retention and Disposition:** Based on the legal, administrative, and financial value of these records, suggest a length of retention (either permanent or non-permanent) and identify the event that triggers the retention countdown. You must select a cutoff event from the drop down list provided (21a). For records that are not permanent, indicate the disposition method to be used at the end of the retention period (21b).

Additionally, you should identify where the records are to be retained (21d) and whether or not they will be microfilmed or digitized (21c).

- 22 **Explanation of Requested Retention and Disposition:** Explain the basis of your requested retention period or provide any additional information needed to clarify the RM-19 Form. Describe any agency work processes that make the requested retention period necessary.

- 23, 24 **Survey Conducted By, Date of Survey:** Enter the name of the person who completed the survey form and the date it was conducted. This person does not need to be a records officer.