



A Brief Guide To: Federal Records Management

Records management means the planning, controlling, directing, organizing, training, promoting, and other managerial activities involved with respect to records creation, maintenance, use, and disposition in order to achieve adequate and proper documentation of the policies and transactions of the Federal Government and effective and economical management of agency operations.

Objectives of Records Management include:

1. Accurately and completely document the policies and transactions of the Federal Government.
2. Control the quantity and quality of records produced by the Federal Government.
3. Establish and maintain mechanisms of control with respect to records creation in order to prevent the creation of unnecessary records and with respect to the effective and economical operations of an agency.
4. Simplify the activities, systems, and processes of records creation and of records maintenance and use.
5. Preserve and dispose of records in accordance with the governing statutes.
6. Direct continuing attention to records from their initial creation to their final disposition, with particular emphasis on the prevention of unnecessary Federal paperwork.
7. Establish and maintain any other systems or techniques NARA determines to be necessary to carry out an effective and efficient Records Management program.

Official Federal records are defined in the Federal Records Act (44 U.S.C. 3301) as follows:

“All books, papers, maps, photographs, machine-readable materials, or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by an agency of the United States Government under federal law or in connection with the transaction of public business and preserved or appropriate for preservation by that agency or its legitimate successor as evidence of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the Government or because of the informational value of data in them.”

Summary of important points:

1. A record contains all information created and/or received in the transaction of official government business, regardless of physical form.
2. If an e-mail message is created or received in the course of conducting official business and is evidence of an official function, activity, decision, policy, etc., the message and all attachments must be printed and filed in the office filing system.

