

FAQs

What is the “Office of the Public Records Administrator?”

The Office of the Public Records Administrator (*OPRA*) is the department within the Connecticut State Library that administers a records management program for the executive branch of the State of Connecticut, as well as Connecticut municipalities. It oversees the State Archives, the State Records Center, and the Historic Documents Preservation Program.

What can *OPRA* do for my agency?

Our staff assists in all aspects of records management activities for state agencies, including:

- Providing guidance and establishing standards and guidelines for managing public records
- Performing limited site visits
- Training for state agency employees
- Presentations to state agencies
- Assisting with scheduling state agency records
- Reviewing and approving disposal authorizations
- Reviewing and approving records retention schedules

What is an “RMLO?”

“RMLO” stands for Records Management Liaison Officer. Pursuant to *Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) Sec. 11-8a (f)*, “each state agency shall cooperate with the State Librarian to carry out the provisions of this section and shall designate an agency employee to serve as the records management liaison officer for this purpose.” To assign an RMLO, please complete and submit the *Records Management Liaison Officer Designation* (Form RC-078), available on our website at <http://www.cslib.org/publicrecords/opraforms.htm>.

What are the statutory requirements of state agencies regarding records management?

Pursuant to *CGS Sec. 11-8a*, state agencies are responsible for:

- Designating an agency employee to serve as records management liaison officer with the Connecticut State Library
- Inventorying records
- Keeping records retention schedules up-to-date
- Transferring historical records to the State Archives
- Disposing of records after written approval is granted

What is a “public record?”

CGS Sec. 1-200 defines public records as, “any recorded data or information relating to the conduct of the public’s business prepared, owned, used, received or retained by a public agency, or to which a public agency is entitled to receive a copy by law or contract under section 1-218, whether such data or information be handwritten, typed, tape-recorded, printed, photostated, photographed or recorded by any other method.”

What is a “record series?”

A record series is a group of similar or related records that are normally used and filed as a unit, for determining a retention period. All of the records that make up a record series must have the same retention period.

What is a “records retention schedule?”

A records retention schedule identifies and describes groups of related records (also called record series) and provides instructions for their disposition when they have fulfilled all administrative, fiscal, legal, and historical / research requirements. It lists the schedule number, item number, record series title, description of records, approved retention period (office, off-site, and total), and legal citations for every record series. An agency may not request permission to dispose of any record(s) until the record series is listed on a records retention schedule.

There are two types of records retention schedules in the State of Connecticut:

1. General
2. Agency-specific

What is the difference between *general* and *agency-specific* records retention schedules?

The Office of the Public Records Administrator issues *General* records retention schedules establishing retention requirements for records common to several or all executive branch agencies. *Agency-specific* records retention schedules cover records that are unique to individual state agencies. The agency schedules must be approved by the agency RMLO, the State Archivist, and the Public Records Administrator.

How do I develop a records retention schedule?

To develop a records retention schedule you must:

1. Inventory the records you need to schedule in order to identify the record series. The inventory may range from a single unit to an entire agency. Agencies may utilize the *Records Inventory Worksheet* (Form RC-104), available at www.cslib.org/publicrecords/opraforms.htm, or develop their own form.
2. Analyze the records on the inventory to determine what records are used together to perform a specific function within the agency. The analysis also determines the administrative requirements for each series, any legal or fiscal requirements that specify the minimum length of time a record must be kept, and the potential historical / research value of the records.
3. Complete a *Records Retention Schedule Worksheet* (Form RC-050W), available on our website at www.cslib.org/publicrecords/opraforms.htm. List all records and provide a comprehensive but concise description. Minimum retention periods should include when the retention period begins (e.g. “6 months from the date file closed”).
4. Submit the completed *Records Retention Schedule Worksheet* (Form RC-050W) to OPRA. Include any statutory or regulatory citations regarding the creation and/or retention of the record series listed.

Staff is available to answer questions and provide guidance during this process as needed. OPRA staff converts the worksheet to the actual records retention schedule (Form RC-050) once all issues concerning the records series and retention periods have been resolved and

returns it to the agency RMLO to be signed. The RMLO submits the signed copy to OPRA for approval by the Public Records Administrator and the State Archivist. Once the schedule is approved, OPRA staff assigns a schedule number and returns it to the agency RMLO. The schedule is now in effect.

How often should I update my agency's records retention schedule(s)?

Agencies should review their schedules annually. The most common reasons an agency needs to update a schedule are due to:

- Changes in statutory or regulatory requirements
- Changes in the function of records
- Transfer of functions from one agency or department to another

Can an agency keep its records past the established retention period?

Yes, the retention period is the minimum required to meet administrative, legal or fiscal needs. However, unless there has been a change in the administrative, legal, or fiscal requirements for the records, an agency should avoid retaining records past the established minimum retention period due to increased administrative costs to the agency and litigation risks.

I have my retention schedule; do I still need to request permission to dispose of my agency's records?

Yes. Pursuant to CGS Sec. 11-8b, "all public records...created by public offices, are the property of the agency concerned and shall not be removed, destroyed, mutilated, transferred or otherwise damaged or disposed of, in whole or in part, except as provided by law or under the rules and regulations adopted by the State Library Board pursuant to the provisions of chapter 54."

How does the agency get approval to dispose of its record?

Agency staff should review the appropriate records retention schedule (*general* or *agency-specific*) with the RMLO to ensure that all retention requirements have been met, and that there are no pending claims, cases, or actions involving the records. If there are none, the RMLO should complete the *Records Disposal Request* (Form RC-108), available at <http://www.cslib.org/publicrecords/opraforms.htm>, and submit it to OPRA. The Public Records Administrator and the State Archivist review all disposal requests. If they approve the request, the form will be returned to the agency. Once the agency RMLO receives the signed *Records Disposal Request* (Form RC-108) back from OPRA, the agency may dispose of the records.

How do I transfer records to the State Records Center?

Records may be transferred to the Records Center if they meet the following conditions:

- The records are on an approved records retention schedule
- The records do not have a "permanent" retention
- The records have met the minimum retention period in the office
- There is space available at the Records Center

Refer to *General Letter 2008-2: Transfer of Records to the State Records Center and Approved Boxes for Records Storage*, for complete information. It is available at <http://www.cslib.org/publicrecords/opraforms.htm#guidelines>.

How do I access records stored at the State Records Center?

The State Records Center is a secured building. Only library staff and authorized agency personnel are allowed access to the facility. Agencies storing records at the State Records Center may request records by completing the *Records Center Reference Request* (Form RC-200) and e-mailing, faxing, or calling-in their request. Staff will process requests as soon as possible, usually within 24 hours.

Can I store state records at a commercial storage vendor?

Pursuant to CGS Sec. 11-8, all security storage facilities for records must be approved by the State Librarian (through the Office of the Public Records Administrator). Records transferred to a commercial storage vendor must be on an approved records retention schedule. It is the agency's responsibility to audit the records on a regular basis to ensure that records are not retained longer than necessary and that the billing matches the number of boxes or storage medium.

What is the best way to physically destroy records?

There are no state laws designating how agencies should destroy public records approved for disposal. The Office of the Public Records Administrator recommends shredding to ensure confidentiality and guaranteed destruction of records. Please refer to the state contract for a current vendor list. Also note that it is important to receive a "certificate of destruction" if utilizing a commercial vendor to document that the records were destroyed.

How do I know if a record is historical?

There are several factors that contribute to the historical value of records. Age is only one of these factors. Please contact the State Archivist for assistance with appraising records for potential historical value.

How do I transfer records to the State Archives?

Records must be identified as having historical value by the State Archivist before they can be transferred to the State Archives. *General Letter 1A: Transfer of Records to the State Archives* details the procedures for transferring historical records to the State Archives. Please contact the State Archivist to arrange for permanent transfer of historical records to the State Archives.

How many copies of a state publication should I transfer to the Connecticut State Library as part of the Connecticut State Depository Program?

The State Library requires 17 copies of each publication. Two are sent to the Library of Congress, two are maintained at the Connecticut State Library (one copy for use and one security copy), and the remaining thirteen are distributed to depository libraries throughout the state.

How do I contact the Connecticut State Library?

Office of the Public Records Administrator

231 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106
(860) 757-6540 [phone]
(860) 757-6542 [fax]
www.cslib.org/publicrecords

Government Information and Reference Services

231 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106
(860) 757-6570 [phone]
(860) 757-6569 [fax]
<http://www.cslib.org/gis.htm>

Connecticut State Archives

231 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106
(860) 757-6511 [phone]
(860) 757-6542 [fax]
<http://www.cslib.org/archives/>

State Records Center

198 West Street
Rocky Hill, CT 06067
(860) 721-2041 [phone]
(860) 721-2055 [fax]
Email: recordsctr@cslib.org

Quick Links

The Office of the Public Records Administrator:

<http://www.cslib.org/publicrecords/>

The State Archives:

<http://www.cslib.org/archives/>

Government Information and Reference Services:

<http://www.cslib.org/gis.htm>

For Forms and Certificates of Compliance:

<http://www.cslib.org/publicrecords/opraforms.htm>

For Information on the State Records Center:

<http://www.cslib.org/publicrecords/records.htm>

For Publications and Annual Reports:

<http://www.cslib.org/publicrecords/opraforms.htm#publications>

For Standards, Guidelines, General Letters, and Legislation:

<http://www.cslib.org/publicrecords/opraforms.htm#guidelines>

For Training Opportunities:

<http://www.cslib.org/publicrecords/opraevents.htm>