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The world becomes more and more digitized, the question of how long to keep certain records becomes more complicated. When everything is recorded and stored electronically, it can be tempting to just keep everything "just in case." However, this kind of thinking can expose your business to unnecessary risk and privacy law compliance issues. The key to a successful records retention schedule is to carefully assess what kind of records you need to keep and for how long. You'll also need to have a system in place for regularly purging outdated or unnecessary records. With a little bit of planning, you can ensure that your business is only retaining the records it needs to keep, minimizing exposure to risk and keeping your data privacy compliant. What is a Records Retention Schedule? A records retention schedule is a systematic plan for how long information must be kept for legal and operational purposes and the guidelines for how to dispose of it. Companies implement retention schedules to maintain regulatory compliance, as well as to ensure disposal methods are legally defensible. In essence, a retention schedule is the foundation of a solid records information management (RIM) program that governs business records throughout their lifecycle. The Value of a Document Retention Schedule The proliferation of data in today's digital world is staggering. Every day, 2.5 quintillion bytes of data are created at a record pace, and this number is only expected to grow in the future. With this massive increase in data comes increased regulations and restrictions on how it is used and stored. This makes records retention schedules increasingly important for businesses in order to stay compliant with the law and protect their data. Records retention schedules are also critical for managing risk. The more data a company has, the more it is exposed to risk. A records retention schedule can help a company reduce its risk by ensuring that only the data it needs to keep is kept, and that it is kept in a secure and compliant manner. The benefits of a records retention schedule are numerous. Control the exponential growth of records Comply with retention guidelines Locate and retrieve documents quickly and efficiently Minimize litigation risks By following these tips, you can create a records retention schedule that minimizes exposure to risk and helps ensure compliance with privacy laws. Here are a few tips to get you started: How to Implement a Records Retention Schedule 1. Know Your Regulatory Requirements It is important for businesses to understand the regulations that govern their industry. Depending on the industry, there may be certain regulations that require businesses to keep records for a certain period of time. For example, in the healthcare industry, HIPAA requires that patient records be kept for at least six years. Businesses should familiarize themselves with these regulatory requirements and make sure they are compliant. Failure to comply with these federal and state retention regulations can result in penalties and other negative consequences. Additionally, businesses should consider their own internal needs and decide how long they want to keep records, even if they are not legally required to do so. Keeping records for longer periods of time can help businesses track trends, improve customer service, and make more informed decisions. 2. Classify Your Records Having an organized system for keeping track of your records is essential for efficient record-keeping. To start, create a spreadsheet or database that is organized into categories that make sense for your business. You could create categories such as "Receipts," "Invoices," and "Bills." If you are organizing files for your medical records management program, you could create categories such as "Lab Results," "Prescriptions," and "Appointment Notes." Once you have created your categories, you can start sorting your records into them. This will make it easier to find the information you need when you need it. By taking the time to classify your records, you can save yourself time and energy in the long run. 3. Determine Document Retention Periods Creating a system for regular purges is essential for any records retention schedule. All records that have exceeded their retention date or no longer have value should be disposed of in a secure manner. The first step is to create a list of all records that need to be purged. This list should include the type of record, the date it was created, the retention date, and any other relevant information. Then, decide on a regular schedule for purging the records. This could be once a month, quarterly, or annually depending on the number of records and your organizational needs. When it comes time to purge the records, make sure you have a secure method in place to ensure that they are destroyed properly. This could include paper shredding or securely deleting digital files from your system. Having a secure document shredding plan in place for regularly purging outdated or unnecessary records will help ensure that you remain compliant with all applicable laws and regulations. 4. Keep Your Records Organized Having an organized filing system is essential for any business, large or small. Keeping your records organized will not only make it easier to find and retrieve the information you need but will also ensure that you comply with any legal requirements for record-keeping. There are a few key steps to organizing your records. First, you need to decide on a filing system that will work best for you. This could be something as simple as organizing your records by type and year, or employing a document scanning company to scan and categorize your records. Once you have your system set up, you need to be consistent with keeping your records up to date and filing them in the right place. As mentioned previously, purging old and unnecessary records is also important to keep your filing system tidy. By following these simple steps, you'll be able to easily maintain an organized filing system that will make it easier to find the records you need. 5. Regularly Update Your Retention Schedule When it comes to rolling out your retention schedule, the key is to make sure the process is efficient and effective. Ensure that everyone in your organization is aware of the changes, and that they understand their roles in helping to implement and enforce the schedule. This could include providing training to relevant staff and creating internal policies and procedures. You should also make sure that your retention schedule is integrated with existing systems and processes, such as document storage and filing systems. Finally, you should take steps to ensure that your retention schedule remains up to date. Additionally, be sure to regularly monitor changes in regulations or conduct regular reviews of the schedule to ensure it is still relevant. By following these steps, you can ensure that your retention schedule is properly implemented and enforced. Ready to Start Your Retention Schedule? When it comes to records retention, it's important to have a plan to ensure that you're compliant with legal and industry regulations. Having a schedule in place will also help you stay organized and ensure that your important documents are properly stored and accessible when needed. That's why we're here to help. VRC offers a range of document scanning and storage solutions to help you start or refresh your records retention schedule. From an initial assessment of your current records management system to the development of a customized document conversion and workflow plan tailored to your specific needs, we can help you create a schedule that meets all of your requirements. We also offer ongoing support to ensure that your records retention schedule remains up-to-date and compliant. So if you're looking for professional assistance to start or refresh your records retention schedule, VRC is here to help. Azam Qureshi, Chief Technology Officer at VRC, says, "Records retention is a critical component of any business's data management strategy. It's not just about keeping records for the sake of it, but about ensuring that the right records are kept for the right reasons and for the right amount of time. Our goal is to help businesses create a records retention schedule that is both effective and efficient, so they can stay compliant with the law and protect their data. 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“General Services” to all of the schedules for that agency. If you work in Human Resources, you can search those keywords to find your agency/division/schedule. Schedule number: This is searching by the agency-assigned internal schedule number. The format of these can vary by agency, so this is the least common way to search for a schedule. State of Agency Retention Schedules Forms and Processes Standard 73 (STD 73) Cover Page: The STD 73 Cover Page is used to display the agency and division information for the retention schedule being submitted. The Cover Page is available only in PDF format and should not include any revisions or detailed scheduled information – please only complete the first page of the PDF document Cover Page – Agency/Department Information (Boxes 1-5) Box (1) should contain the Department/Agency name that the schedule is for. Box (2), for IMS Code and Billing Codes, are not necessary to complete, but you may if you prefer. CaIRIM only accepts schedules electronically, via email, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, so routing schedules via IMS Code is no longer utilized. CaIRIM also no longer charges for our review services, so the Billing Code does not need to be provided unless you would like to do so. It can be helpful for easy reference if the agency stored with SRC or other third-parties. Box (3) will contain the number of pages on the retention schedule submission. This total will likely change as the schedule goes through CaIRIM review—the agency may enter their current total of pages upon submission, but CaIRIM will update this number upon approval. Box (4) should contain the name of the Division/Branch/Section that the schedule is for. Box (5) should contain the address of where this Division/Branch/Section is located. These three boxes on the Cover Page will indicate what type of retention schedule is being submitted. Only one box should be selected to clarify the type of submission for the schedule. Cover Page - Retention Schedule Submission Type (Boxes 6-8) Box (6) - New Retention Schedule For a schedule to be considered a new schedule, the record and record series within that schedule are items that have never been scheduled before. Common events that lead to the creation of a new schedule are: An agency is new and has never filed a retention schedule. The agency has a new division. The agency has a new unit. Box (7) - Revised Retention Schedule A Revision should take place every 4.5 to 5 years after the approval of the last schedule, but no earlier. For example, if the schedule was approved 10/20/2019, it can be revised no earlier than 4/20/2024. To send records to the State Records Center, the schedule must be current and compliant, so it can be helpful to utilize the 6-month window. Revisions also must meet the current standards in verbiage and formatting, so it is important to check the Records Management Handbook or with CaIRIM for any changes. Box (8) - Amended Retention Schedule An amendment takes place anytime in the first 4.5 years of the life of the STD. 73 (Records Retention Schedule). Reasons for submitting an amendment must be for a substantial reason which include but are not limited to typos that fundamentally alter the STD. 73 (Records Retention Schedule), incorrect retention periods or updates to retention periods, the beginning of a new program, a program goes into sunset, disbands, or ends work, transfer of records, and digitization and paper reduction projects. An amendment has the same expiration date, approval number, and internal schedule number as the original record retention schedule. This begs the question, “What is the purpose of an amendment?” First, it makes the STD. 73 (Records Retention Schedule) more accurately reflect daily workflow and business practice. This reduces risk and liability. It also gives the agency the ability to legally destroy previously unscheduled records and it will make the revision of the schedule significantly easier as part of the work has already been completed. Cover Page - New Schedule Information (Boxes 9-12) In these boxes, please enter the New Schedule Information, which is the information that corresponds to this current schedule you are submitting. Box (9) is the internally assigned agency Schedule Number you have assigned to this schedule. The format of this number should be decided on internally, be easily identifiable and searchable, and should best fit your business need. Box (10), Schedule Date, should be the date that the schedule was submitted to CaIRIM. Box (11), Number of Pages, should contain the total number of pages your schedule contains. This number may change during the review process, but CaIRIM will ensure to update the page number upon approval if it has changed. Box (12), Cubic Feet, should contain the total cubic footage of all the records on your schedule. Cover Page - Previous Schedule Information (Boxes 13-16) In these boxes, please enter the appropriate information from the previously approved schedule that is being revised or amended. NOTE: These boxes will only be applicable to Revisions and Amendments, as new schedules will not have any previous schedules to reference back to. Box (13), Schedule Number, should contain the internally assigned agency schedule number for the previous schedule. The format can vary and is decided internally by the agency, but a suggested format is Agency, Division, and year (ex. DMV-OPS-2021). However, this format is entirely up to your agency and your business need. Box (14), Approval Number, should contain the previous seven-digit approval number assigned to the previous schedule. This is so that Archives staff and agency records management staff can reference the previous schedule, ensure all records are accounted for, and identify where new records may have been added. On a Previous Schedule, the Approval Number can be found on the Cover Page. Box (15), Approval Date, should contain the date the previous schedule was approved. Box (16), Pages Revised, should contain the number of pages that have been altered in your current submission. For an Amendment, a specified page range, such as 2, or 1-4, is preferable so Archives staff can identify where a change was made. For a Revision, the entire schedule should be updated, so simply entering “All” in this field will suffice. Cover Page - Functional Statement (Box 17) This piece of the Cover Page should contain the division/branch/section’s Functional Statement. The Functional Statement should clearly identify what the responsibilities, functions, and specified tasks of that division/branch/section are. For example, a Functional Statement for the CaIRIM team might read something like this: “CaIRIM reviews State Agency Records Retention Schedules; establishes guidelines, including those for the management of electronic records; provides consultation; evaluates the effectiveness of existing records management programs; and assists in the establishment of new records programs.” Cover Page - Signature Information (Boxes 18-21) These boxes should contain information for the Manager Responsible for Records. This person will be identified by the agency as the correct Manager to sign off on the finalized retention schedule. Box (18) can be left blank, as the schedule will be sent for signature upon approval by the State Archives. Box (19) should contain the title of the Manager Responsible for Records, such as SSML, SSML, etc. Please also include the manager’s office telephone number. Box (20) should contain the manager’s office telephone number. Box (21) can be left blank until the schedule is signed upon approval by the State Archives. Boxes 22-26: These boxes should contain information for the Records Management Coordinator (RMC). The RMC is the only person who will ever sign in this space on the STD. 73 Cover Page. Like above, Box (22) and Box (26) may be left blank, as signatures and signature information will be obtained once the schedule has been approved. Records Retention Schedule Form - STD 73, Page 2 The Standard 73 (STD. 73) Page 2 is drafted and submitted to CaIRIM in Excel format, and contains the actual listing of agency records, their retention periods, and storage instructions. If the functional statement is long, and it does not fit on the Cover Page, it may be entered in the designated section at the top of Page 2 of the STD 73 Excel sheet instead. If your statement fits on the Cover Page, please enter “See Page 1” in this box instead. The top of the Page 2 also includes a space to define all acronyms used throughout the records retention schedule. Any acronyms used must be defined in this table. Keep in mind that using acronyms can often make following a schedule more confusing—it is best practice to spell out acronyms throughout the schedule for clarity. Page 2 - Item Number (Column 37) The retention schedule’s item numbers should start at 1 and increase sequentially throughout the schedule (i.e., 1, 2, 3, etc.). If a record series exists in multiple formats, those become alpha numeric (i.e., 1, 2, 3a (paper version), 3b (electronic version), 3c (film/microfilm version), 4, 5, etc.). Note: If there are headings to differentiate different record types (i.e., Fiscal, Human Resources, etc.) or different units under the same division are being used, those do not need to be numbered. Numbering is used for records and record series only. Page 2 - Calculating Cubic Feet (Column 38) This column accounts for cubic footage of your paper records. This does not have to be exact. We only ask for cubic footage for your paper or other physical records. One easy way to measure cubic footage is to keep in mind that one (1) full Records Storage Box equals one (1) cubic foot (C.U.). Page 2 - CA State Archives Use Only (Column 39) This column is where the “Notify Archives” flag is placed by the archivists reviewing the schedule. Any records that are flagged “Notify Archives” have been identified to have historical value and cannot be destroyed without contacting the State Archives and receiving approval for destruction first. Page 2 - Title And Description (Column 40) This column is where an agency’s records series are documented. CaIRIM expects to see records series on schedules structured with a title and a description. It is important that the title of each record series be as accurate as possible. Some examples of useful record series titles are: “Legislative Analysis Files,” “Legal Opinions,” “Official Personnel File Documents,” “Public Conference Videos,” and so on. Vague titles, such as “Corporate Papers,” “Miscellaneous Files,” “Official Documents” or “Essential Correspondence” should not be used. In addition to a clear and useful title, record series should also have clear and detailed “Descriptions.” The description of a record series should outline the contents, function, and purpose of the records in that series. This section should contain information on how the records are used, what function the records serve in the unit, and what business processes the records support or document. The description should be written as if explaining the record series to a person who is completely unfamiliar with the processes and purpose of the unit and the State agency. It is especially important to note in the description if the records pertain to higher levels of management within the State agency. This information is essential to State Archivists who will review the Records Retention Schedule, looking for records of historical interest. For example, if a record series includes decision-making correspondence by a Division Chief, or maps of historical buildings and locations, or Committee or Board meeting minutes, etc. Page 2 - Media Type (Column 41) The four main media categories accepted on retention schedules are electronic, film, magnetic, and paper. Within each of these four categories, there are multiple types of “carriers” where records may be stored. More specific information on the media carrier type should be included in the Remarks section of the schedule. For example, if a record series is labeled with media type “E” for electronic, the Remarks should say whether the records are stored on CDs, removable media (like a thumb drive), on a database, etc. It is important to know what carrier type records are stored on, especially if the records are identified as having potential historical importance and may go to the State Archives at the end of their retention period. If a record series exists in multiple media formats, each media should be listed as a separate line item. Page 2 - Essential/Vital Records (Column 42) State agencies are required by the State Records Management Act to identify “records essential to the functioning of state government in the event of a major disaster” (Government Code section 12274(b). Essential records must have a mark in column (42) and the remark needs to include how the records are protected. They can be stored in either: A fire-proof container onsite; Off-site storage, 20 or more miles away from the office; Cloud storage. These acceptable storage methods for essential records ensures the agency’s ability to continue business in the event of a natural disaster and that those essential records are kept safe. Page 2 - Retention Periods (Column 43 - 46) Every item on the STD. 73 (Records Retention Schedule) needs a retention period. These belong in columns (43) (44) (45) and (46) where (46) is the total from adding columns (43) (44) and (45). If the records will be stored for any period of time in the main office or one of the field offices, this value is entered into (43). If the records will be transferred to an agency owned or rented storage facility, the total amount of time these will live in storage before destruction belongs in (44). If the records will be transferred to the State Records Center (SRC), the State Records Center retention belongs in (45). The total retention belongs in (46), so (46) should never be blank. For clarity, ALL retention periods should be followed by the word “days,” “months,” or “years.” Active Periods & Cutoff Dates If an active period is being used, an inactivation trigger, or cutoff date must accompany it in the remarks. An inactivation trigger cannot be subjective or open ended, such as: “Active until no longer needed,” or “Active until management approves destruction.” These inactivation triggers can vary in results depending on the person, their outlook, and how they make decisions. In records management, we want to ensure there are not any “holes” in our records management programs—active triggers must have concrete milestones to reach that clearly end their Active period and begin the retention period. Some examples of great cutoff date inactivation triggers are, “Active until project is completed,” “Active until employee has transferred, retired, or separated from State service.” Unless a legal statute exists requiring permanent retention, permanent retention should be avoided and storage of 50 years or more must be justified. Your CaIRIM analyst will ask you to provide in the remarks section a code and explanation to how such retention fits your business needs. As well as adding in the remarks a note to review records every few years to ensure the lengthy retention is needed. Regarding permanent retention, unless a legal statute exists requiring permanent retention, permanent retention should be avoided and storage of 50 years or more must be justified. We advise agencies to avoid permanent retentions because it is ultimately an unrealistic timeframe to keep records. Records degenerate over time and require maintenance and upkeep. Paper, for instance, often must kept in a temperature-controlled environment and in archival boxes in order to be properly preserved, and it’s not common for agencies to have these amenities in their buildings to keep their permanent records safe. This is something to consider when proposing a permanent retention for something—these records MUST be kept permanently, unaltered, in order to be in compliance with the schedule. In addition, having a 50-year retention where the records are revisited, and either deemed to be kept longer or verified to be ready for destruction, this can keep records from getting lost, especially when they are in offsite storage. Page 2 - PRA/IPA Exemptions (Column 47) Some records have Public Records Act (PRA) or Informational Practices Act (IPA) exemptions from disclosure because they contain confidential information that cannot be provided to the public. Confidential information can also include personally identifiable information, or PII, amongst other things that are detailed in the PRA/IPA code exemptions. Gov. Code 7920 is the full California Public Records Act (exemptions are typically included under Government Code 7920). Civil Code 1798 is the Information Practices Act of 1977. If all or part of the record series has an exemption, in column (47) an “X” needs to appear for PRA exemptions and “I” for IPA exemptions. Proper government code and section will need to be added to the remarks as well. Page 2 - Writing Robust Remarks (Column 48) Remarks specify the end of the active period, cite code sections relevant to the records, outline the disposition of the series, the essential (essential) or confidential status of the series, and more. In the case of electronic records, the remarks section will include the storage method used for the record series, the retention period, the back-up process, and the disposition of the electronic records. If an active period is being used, an active trigger must accompany it in the remarks. An active trigger cannot be subjective or open ended, such as: “Active until no longer needed,” or “Active until management approves destruction.” These active triggers are very open-ended and can vary in results depending on the person, their outlook, and how they make decisions. In records management, we want to ensure there are not any “holes” in our records management programs—active triggers must have concrete milestones to reach that clearly end their Active period and begin the retention period. Summary of Changes A Summary of Changes is an excel document that must be included when amending or revising a Retention Schedule. The Summary must outline all changes being made to the records series from the old schedule to the new Retention Schedule. This document is necessary for staff at the State Agency, for the CaIRIM Analysts, for the Archivists in SRAP, as well as for any member of the public reading the Schedule to be able to track the changes made to a Retention Schedule over time. The Summary of Changes is also, virtually, a written way to audit your records at the agency level. In the long term, the Summary of Changes assists records management staff in identifying why a record series was removed from a schedule, or when a change or addition occurred, and why. If a record series is removed from the retention schedule, this should only occur if the records: 1) are no longer being created by the agency in any format and 2) those existing records met their established retention and were destroyed. Keep in mind nothing should be left blank. Each record needs to be accounted for on its own line. Box (1), Approval Number - The agency should add the approval number that correlates to the previous retention schedule that is now being amended or revised by this current submission. CaIRIM will add the NEW approval number once the schedule is finalized and ready for DocuSign. Column (3), Previous Item Number - Number assigned to the record/record series being described on the previous Records Retention Schedule. List any record on the old retention schedule that has been changed, updated, or deleted. The numbers need to be listed in an ascending, consecutive order (e.g., 1,2,3a, 3b), Column (4), New Item Number - Number assigned to the record/record series being described on the amended/revised Records Retention Schedule that is being submitted. In ascending, consecutive order, list what the line-item number is. It will show whether the line-item number is the same or has changed. Column (5), Action - This column will specify what action has been taken on a record series. Mark with an “x” whether the record/record series has been changed, deleted, or added. Column (6), Title of Record - This column should contain the title of the record series being changed, deleted, or added. Any changed or added series should reflect as they appear on the amended/revised Records Retention Schedule currently being submitted. If deleting a record/record series, list the title from the previous schedule. Column (7), Comments - Any comments that will briefly explain what changed, or why the record series has been deleted or added. For example, “CHANGE - Updated title and added description.” Or “ADD - New series to reflect records left off previous schedule.” Or “DELETE - Series moved to schedule 2024-001, function moved to different Division.” Column (8), Media Type - List each media type on a separate line. Appropriate storage media code for the series of records described: Code Media Type Examples E Electronic CD, Data base, DVD, Email, Removable Media, Server, Social Media, etc. F Film Film Stock, Microfiche, Microfilm, Silver Halide, etc. M Magnetic Media Audio Cassette, VHS, etc. P Paper Architectural Drawings, Blueprints, Graphic Prints, Map, Photograph, etc. Accounting for Unit Name Changes and Addressing Combined Schedules - Amendments and Revisions If there is a name change to a division/unit/program, or if a unit/program has been absorbed into another division, this must be accounted for on a retention schedule. It is incredibly important to ensure these records from the changed units are being accounted for in a way that accurately reflects your organizational structure and business needs. Records Management Coordinator (RMC) should ensure the cover page, Record Retention Schedule, and the Summary of Changes has been reviewed and approved by the program manager responsible for the records as well as the legal team to ensure everything is accurate and correct. Revising Records Retention Schedules Revisions are made at the end of the five-year approval period. Retention Schedules are valid for five years from their approval date. When the five years have elapsed, the Retention Schedule is considered expired. Until an expired Retention Schedule is revised, the State agency may not send physical records to the State Records Center (SRC), per SAM 1616. It is important for State agencies to revise their Retention Schedules every five years to ensure the information on the Schedules continues to be accurate. Business practices may have changed since a Retention Schedule was last approved. Some records series may no longer be used, or the treatment of a record series may have changed, new records series may have been created, a Division or unit may have been reorganized or dissolved, etc. To create a revision, fill out the Records Retention Schedule (STD. 73) and indicate an amendment is being made to a previous Schedule using the appropriate checkbox on the Cover Page. The previous schedule and approval numbers must be included. Any change or addition to a Schedule should be made promptly, and news of the change should be immediately dispersed to those using the Schedule. If there was a name change to a division/unit/program, you can place the name in the TITLE Section and add in the comments what the name changed to. If staff who use the Retention Schedule are not notified of a change, there is a danger of records being mishandled or even destroyed before their retention period has ended. An amended Schedule will retain the schedule number of the previous approved Retention Schedule. CaIRIM will add an amendment number (i.e.: A1, A2, etc.) to the approval number to help differentiate between the original approved schedule and any subsequent amendments. Amendments do not alter the schedule expiration date. The titles, descriptions, and treatment of the records series listed on the Retention Schedule must be written in an uncomplicated style that can be understood by persons unfamiliar with the business process of the submitting State agency. Prior to submission, the Records Management Coordinator (RMC) should ensure the cover page, Record Retention Schedule, and the Summary of Changes has been reviewed and approved by the program manager responsible for the records as well as the legal team to ensure everything is accurate and correct. Revising Records Retention Schedules Revisions are made at the end of the five-year approval period. Retention Schedules are valid for five years from their approval date. When the five years have elapsed, the Retention Schedule is considered expired. Until an expired Retention Schedule is revised, the State agency may not send physical records to the State Records Center (SRC), per SAM 1616. It is important for State agencies to revise their Retention Schedules every five years to ensure the information on the Schedules continues to be accurate. Business practices may have changed since a Retention Schedule was last approved. Some records series may no longer be used, or the treatment of a record series may have changed, new records series may have been created, a Division or unit may have been reorganized or dissolved, etc. To create a revision, fill out the Records Retention Schedule (STD. 73) and indicate on the Cover Page that a revision is being made to a previous Schedule. The previous schedule and approval numbers must be included so that the previous schedule can easily be compared to the new submission, and all changes identified and accounted for on the Summary of Changes. Updating A Retention Schedule Due to Digitization It’s important to ensure these new records are accounted for on the unit’s records retention schedule so that they have an identifiable retention period and can eventually be legally destroyed. The schedule must also be updated before any paper records can be legally destroyed after scanning, as this destruction would occur before their retention was up. If your schedule is current (within its 5-year expiration date), RMCs can work with RMACs and program staff to draft and submit an Amendment to update that current schedule. If your schedule is expired (it has met or passed its 5-year expiration date), the RMCs can still work with their RMACs and program staff to get a revised submission drafted and submitted to CaIRIM. Update line item: Have records reached the end of their retention period? Are record series appropriately identified? Have the file formats been identified? Update records descriptions: For paper records, clarify the years/timeframe of when paper will be kept and when electronic records are kept. In other words, what years are available in that format (ex. Electronic records are available as of 2023. Or, “we no longer receive paper records as of 2023; see item 1b for electronic versions). Update the Media column (41): Each record series held in a different format must have its own line item and the accurate media type provided in the Media column (41). P = Paper (for physical paper records), E = Electronic (for electronic or digitized records) Update the remarks (column 48): Be sure you are explaining in the remarks where electronic records are stored (ex. Electronic records are stored on server/shared drive/cloud.) Provide an explanation of the Digitization process (ex. Explain what happens to paper records, whether they are destroyed or kept after digitization has occurred). Complete the Summary of Changes: Whether you are changing the format (no longer creating/receiving physical records) or if digitization is ongoing and you have BOTH media types on your schedule, the Summary of Changes needs to clearly reflect your additions and changes to the schedule. The Records Retention Schedule Process The Records Management Act states that the Secretary of State shall establish, “standards, procedures, and techniques for effective management of records.” The Records Retention Schedule (STD 73) is the mechanism used by the Secretary of State to manage the State’s records. The information needed to create a Retention Schedule begins with program staff. Program staff are the employees who create/receive and use the records to conduct the State agency’s business. These employees should know the contents, use, and necessary retention for the records listed on the Schedule Program staff should identify the records held by the State agency and share this information with the records management team to create the Retention Schedule. The records management team should take the information from the program staff and format that information into the Records Retention Schedule. If there is a Records Management Assistant Coordinator (RMAC) assigned to the unit, the RMAC should work directly with program staff to conduct an inventory of their records and convey the information from that inventory to the Records Management Coordinator (RMC). The RMC and RMAC should organize the records found during the inventory into records series on their drafted Records Retention Schedule. Submitting the Schedule for CaIRIM Review When a Records Retention Schedule is completed by an agency, the RMC should preproofread the schedule to fix as many edits as possible. The RMC would communicate with the agency staff managing the records and explain to them the edit expectation and why. Once the RMC has helped fix up the schedule, they can email an electronic version of the form to their assigned CaIRIM Records Analyst or CaIRIM@sos.ca.gov for review. The list of CaIRIM Analyst assignments are on the CaIRIM website. Retention Schedule Documents to Email to CaIRIM: STD 73 Cover Page (PDF) STD 73 Page 2 (Excel) Summary of Changes (Excel, if applicable) Agency Organizational Chart (listing each division/unit and showing the hierarchy of the agency CaIRIM does not need to see staff names or position vacancies. The full approval process is covered more in Chapter 8. Submitting an Organizational Chart When submitting a Retention Schedule, the RMC must include a current organizational chart for the State agency. The chart must list out every division, unit, and program under the agency as a whole. Having this information allows the State Archives to review Retention Schedules within the context of the agency and its internal hierarchy. CaIRIM often receives ORG charts that break down a specific division/unit, or only list out names and positions of those working under a given division/unit, but this is not the information CaIRIM is looking for. Records retention for businesses and organizations is the process or system for managing confidential records, including developing a retention schedule and ensuring legal and regulatory compliance. Records and document management is crucial for meeting legal, operational, and compliance needs. This article will explore the significance of records retention and how to create an effective schedule and policy. We will discuss legal compliance, data privacy and security benefits, how to develop a retention schedule for digital and physical documents, and how to create a comprehensive records retention policy. What is Records Retention? Records retention refers to an organization’s practices to protect and keep important documents for the required duration. This practice helps businesses store, access, and dispose of records effectively, meeting legal, operational, and compliance needs while promoting efficiency and responsibility. Record retention is necessary to keep important and valuable information safe, including documents and files. The Role of Records Retention in Compliance Records retention is also key for maintaining compliance with industry regulations (e.g., GDPR, HIPAA, SOX). Every industry has its own defined laws and regulations for how long various types of records, such as financial records, employee data, or environmental reports, must be kept, from storage to management rules. By adhering to a strict record retention policy, you won’t have to worry about compliance issues that could result in legal penalties and reputational harm. To learn more about your industry-specific compliance needs, contact the records retention experts at Midway Document Destruction. Why is a Records Retention Policy Important? Implementing a formal records retention policy is vital for businesses. It effectively reduces legal risks, enhances data privacy, and improves operational efficiency, all while protecting personal and business information throughout its lifecycle. Benefits for Data Privacy and Security A data retention policy is also necessary to protect sensitive data from breaches or unauthorized access. Limiting the amount of stored data minimizes the risk of cyberattacks. Legal and Regulatory Compliance Considerations Specific laws and regulations govern records retention. For instance, IRS guidelines for data retention state that you must keep your records for three years from the filing date of your original return or two years from the tax payment, whichever is later if you’re filing a credit or refund claim. Hold onto those records for seven years if you claim a loss from worthless securities or a bad debt deduction. While SEC requirements mandate that broker-dealer records be retained for at least three years, with the first two years easily accessible, this is specified in Rule 17a-4, which outlines broker recordkeeping standards. How to Determine a Records Retention Schedule Conducting a records audit is important to creating a records retention schedule that meets an organization’s needs. This audit helps identify all the records the organization generates and assesses their business value. Additionally, it involves determining legal retention requirements and effectively managing both digital and physical records. Conducting a Records Inventory Start by performing a comprehensive inventory of all records, including digital and physical formats. Ensure that records are categorized by type, as this will establish a solid foundation for an effective retention schedule. Understanding Retention Periods To determine record retention periods, consider legal requirements, industry standards, and business needs. Short-term classified data, like emails, can be automatically deleted, while long-term records, such as contracts, must be kept for several years before archiving or deletion. Managing Digital vs. Physical Records Digital data security is maintained through access controls and backup systems. Physical record retention can be challenging because of limited storage, damage risks, and retrieval issues, making secure storage essential. Digital records use electronic systems and tools for seamless organization and efficiency, whereas physical records need to be indexed and labeled for quick and easy access. Building a Comprehensive Records Retention Policy Developing a comprehensive and actionable records retention policy must align with legal requirements, organizational goals, and employee engagement. Key Elements to Include Key components of a strong retention policy include precise retention schedules, designated responsibilities, and procedures for secure destruction. Implementation and Employee Training For a successful records retention policy to work, employee buy-in and training are a must, as this will support adherence to the policy. When rolling out the policy across departments, it should be organized, documented, and explained to employees the need and rationale behind it. Then, for continued compliance monitoring, establish a system to track policy, which can be automated using specific tools. Best Practices for Records Retention To enhance records retention efforts, organizations should adhere to best practices that improve compliance and efficiency, such as conducting regular policy reviews and ensuring secure document destruction. Regular Policy Reviews Regular reviews of the retention policy every one to two years will help address changing regulations and organizational needs. Conduct these reviews by assessing the effectiveness of the existing retention policy and identifying areas for improvement, evaluating current laws and regulations for compliance, reviewing recent operational changes, and getting feedback from all those involved in the records lifecycle. Secure Document Destruction It is extremely important to securely dispose of records that have reached the end of their retention period. Find the proper method of document destruction, such as shredding or incineration, that follows regulations to avoid non-compliance implications. Partnering with Experts for Records Management Partnering with professionals to manage your records retention policies can have significant advantages, including improved compliance and reduced risks. By collaborating with specialized companies like Midway Document Destruction, organizations can leverage their extensive experience in compliance, minimize risks through best practices, and utilize technology solutions for efficient storage, retrieval, and disposal of information. Why Choose Midway Document Destruction? Contact Midway for expertise in records retention, secure document destruction, and compliance solutions. Our professional and reliable data privacy and document destruction services simplify records management and give our clients peace of mind. Discover our records destruction, management, and storage services now!

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