

Using Records Retention Schedules: How Long Do COVID-19 Pandemic Records Need to Be Kept?

Purpose: Provide guidance to state and local government agencies on the retention requirements for records relating to the agency's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

State and local agencies will want to document their actions in response to this global emergency in order to preserve an accurate historical account of life in our state during the novel coronavirus pandemic. Records documenting your agency's response to the pandemic should be retained for 6 years and then transferred to Washington State Archives under **Emergency/Disaster Response/Recovery – Significant/Uncommon or Major (DAN GS 25006/GS 50-18-29)**.

The "ARCHIVAL" records of your agency's response may include:

- ✓ Emergency operations center activities and communications; State of Emergency/disaster damage declaration; Invocation of mutual aid or interlocal agreements with adjoining local jurisdictions; Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) claims;
- ✓ Records documenting the creation and administration of new or temporary services offered by the agency to provide relief/aid to those experiencing hardship due to the pandemic; Actions implemented to protect life, property, public peace, the environment, and/or the economic base of the community;
- ✓ Notices informing the public about limited agency services or operations via social media posts, agency websites, press releases, or mailing lists; Public feedback evaluating the agency's response to the pandemic, limited services, or pandemic-related special services;
- ✓ Photos/video documenting the agency's response, such as photos of notices posted in agency buildings, photos of social distancing measures implemented in the agency's office or jurisdiction, recorded webinars presented by the agency in lieu of in-person trainings, etc.
- ✓ Internal memos and reports documenting new work arrangements or new remote work procedures in response to the Governor's "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" Order.

NOTE: Agencies whose core business includes responding to pandemics, such as the Military Department, health departments/districts, law enforcement agencies, etc., should follow the retention requirements in their agency-specific or sector-specific records retention schedules.

What records shouldn't be included?

These records should be retained as normal under the appropriate records retention schedule:

- ✗ Employee medical records, including temperature tests taken at the beginning of each shift or results from employees being tested for COVID-19;
- ✗ Purchase requests for agency-provided devices, new software, or VPN access to agency networks to enable staff to work remotely;
- ✗ Client-specific records of the agency providing relief/aid to individuals or records of the agency responding to individual inquiries for clarification on agency services.

**Additional advice regarding the management of public records is available from
Washington State Archives:**