
Record and Data Retention Schedule

*A comprehensive guide for hospitals and other
health care providers*

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Preface

Health care providers create volumes of records dealing with a variety of matters. Some concern the corporate, business and administrative aspects of their operations. Others document unique areas, such as medical staff activities at hospitals. Still others trace the course of care given to patients. Providers naturally consider retaining any record that is of more than passing interest. However, as records accumulate, they occupy valuable space that often could be put to better use. Storing records off-site or in electronic form may alleviate the problem. However, these alternatives are likely to be expensive and do not address the basic question of which records should be kept and for how long.

If health care providers are to deal intelligently with the problem, they must base their decisions upon a firm knowledge of legal requirements and policy considerations. This guide discusses those requirements and considerations, and recommends specific periods for the retention of various classes of records.

The guide contains two sections. The first is a discussion of retention considerations as they pertain to various kinds of records.

The second section is a Recommended Retention Schedule. It contains tables listing typical records, legal citations applicable to each health care provider type, and recommended retention periods. This schedule does not list every possible record that may be produced or retained by a health care provider but rather provides recommendations and cites legal requirements for the most common documents. For those records not specifically addressed in this guide, CHA recommends considering retention periods for records listed which are of a similar nature or purpose and consulting your legal counsel.

The guide is not designed to serve as a substitute for legal counsel. If there are differences of opinion, or where the law is unclear, a provider should consult legal counsel and then make retention decisions based on the law and its own philosophy, mission and purpose.

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