

Office of the Public Records Administrator

Pursuant to §11-8 and §11-8a of the *General Statutes of Connecticut*, the Office of the Public Records Administrator (OPRA) is responsible for designing and implementing a records management program for the executive branch state agencies and political subdivisions of the state, including the towns, cities, boroughs and districts.

Public Records are defined by CGS §1-200(5) 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.” Government records are classified as public records regardless of format (i.e., paper, electronic) or level of access (i.e., open, restricted).

Responsibilities and Services:

- Develop and administer regulations, policies, and standards for the creation, maintenance, storage, and disposition of government records. Areas of oversight include, but are not limited to: records retention, destruction and transfer; hard copy and electronic records requirements; and municipal land recording and vaults.
- Establish records retention schedules that set the minimum retention requirements for state agency and local government records. Retention periods are based on analysis of the administrative, fiscal, legal, and historical/research values for each records series.
- Review and approve records disposition requests in conjunction with the State Archivist.
- Operate the State Records Center to offer secure, off-site storage of inactive and semi-active records at no cost to state agencies. Coordinate the disposition of records stored at the Records Center on an annual basis.
- Administer grants to municipalities to improve the preservation and management of local government records through the Historic Documents Preservation Program.
- Publish guidelines to keep government agencies informed about current records management issues and requirements and provide related training.
- Respond to requests from state/local agency staff and the public to provide guidance, information and assistance.

Benefits of Records Management

- **Increases efficiencies and reduces costs**
 - Organized records systems allow for better access to information
 - Routine review of records for disposal means agencies are not paying for filing equipment, electronic file storage or off-site facilities to store records that have already met retention requirements
- **Improves accountability and reduces liabilities**
 - Proper storage protects records integrity and reduces the risk of damage, loss or unauthorized access
 - Disposal of records according to established protocols ensures transparency and legally defensible destruction
- **Improves services and protects the rights of citizens**
 - Staff can more easily respond to Freedom of Information Requests and access information needed for citizen services
 - Records that document citizen rights – such as land and vital records – are protected and maintained as permanent records
- **Ensures agencies have records needed to operate during an emergency**
 - Agencies identify essential operational records in advance and address records needs within a Continuity of Operations Plan
 - Agencies have access to the records needed to respond and provide vital government services during and following an emergency
- **Supports the identification and preservation of the historical record**
 - Retention schedules and disposition procedures provide the framework for identifying valuable records
 - Standards for records creation and maintenance reduce the risk of deterioration or loss over time
 - Records with enduring value are maintained permanently by the agency or transferred to an archival repository