

# Records Management Guidance

## Managing Records in Databases

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When deciding to design, purchase, and/or implement new databases or IT systems for storing and managing records, remember that King County employees and agencies must manage records in accordance with legal requirements and records management best practices.

**There is NOT one retention period for database records** The retention period for public records depends on the function and content of the record, not format. Retention length and how records are dispositioned depends of the records business, legal and accountability needs and are identified in [King County Records Retention Schedules](#).

**You should NOT simply keep the database forever** – Keeping every database record is not the same as managing the records contained within databases and information systems. This strategy is unsustainable. It will make locating public records that may need to be produced for public records request, litigation, or audits, more difficult and may impact the performance of the database.

**TIPS to manage records in databases** - Records created in databases should be protected and accessible throughout their entire lifecycle. You should be able to apply retention and disposition records from the database once the retention requirement has been satisfied.

- The system should identify and organize or sort records by record series and retention requirements. This may include using metadata to associate records with their appropriate record series. This may be done manually or automatically as information is created or records uploaded.
- Records should be protected from alteration, deletion, or unapproved access.
- Records should remain accessible for their entire lifecycle, and the integrity of the information preserved if/when records are to be exported and/or migrated to a new system.
- The system should be able to export records for transfer to Content Manager for retention and/or final disposition. If the system will purge non-archival records at the end of their required retention, the agency must follow the proper King County destruction review and approval processes in accordance with INF-15-3-3-EP.
- Databases should be backed up regularly.
- Security and access should be validated regularly, including for HIPAA, and PII.
- The database should create an audit trail that logs when records are modified or deleted.
- Metadata is also considered part of the record and should also be managed with the records.



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**The same rules apply to databases or systems that are contracted by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party-**

Records managed on 3<sup>rd</sup> party systems must also be managed according to the above guidelines. Contract language should specify King County ownership of records and that the vendor/contractor must be able to provide the complete records to the county.

**Where can I find out what the retention is, based on the records' function and content?**

The Records Management Program [Retention Schedule webpage](#) hosts the King County General Retention Schedule and Agency-Specific Schedules for County employee reference to identify the retention for your records. If you are not able to locate your record categories on the County schedules, contact the Records Management Program.

**For additional assistance please Contact the King County Records Management Program:**  
[records.management@kingcounty.gov](mailto:records.management@kingcounty.gov), or 206-477-6889.

