

## **Revision to Alabama Department of Mental Health Records Disposition Authority (RDA)**

At the request of the Alabama Department of Mental Health, the State Records Commission approved the following revision to the Alabama Department of Mental Health's RDA:

### **Revision:**

Subfunction:

### **Medical Services**

Patient Medical Records

Paper Patient Medical Records

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 21 years after the patient is discharged from the agency's facility.

MICROFILM PATIENT MEDICAL RECORDS

Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

Subfunction:

### **Administering Internal Operations**

Legal Case Files

Temporary Record. Retain 8 years after final disposition of the legal matter.

(Please contact the ADAH re: preservation of any future legal cases that staff deem landmark/historical.)

## **Requirements and Recommendations for Implementing the Records Disposition Authority**

Under the Code of Alabama 1975, Section 41-13-21, "no state officer or agency head shall cause any state record to be destroyed or otherwise disposed of without first obtaining approval of the State Records Commission." This Records Disposition Authority constitutes authorization by the State Records Commission for the disposition of the records of the Alabama Department of Mental Health (hereafter referred to as the agency) as stipulated in this document.

One condition of this authorization is that the agency submits an annual Records Disposition Authority (RDA) Implementation Report on agency records management activities, including documentation of records destruction, to the State Records Commission in April of each year. In addition, the agency should make every effort to establish and maintain a quality record-keeping program through the following activities:

- The agency should designate a records liaison, who is responsible for: ensuring the development of quality record-keeping systems that meet the business and legal needs of the agency, coordinating the transfer and destruction of records, ensuring that permanent records held on alternative storage media (such as microforms and digital imaging systems) are maintained in compliance with national and state standards, and ensuring the regular implementation of the agency's approved RDA.
- Permanent records in the agency's custody should be maintained under proper intellectual control and in an environment that will ensure their physical order and preservation.
- Destruction of temporary records, as authorized in this RDA, should occur agency-wide on a regular basis—for example, after the successful completion of an audit, at the end of an administration, or at the end of a fiscal year. Despite the RDA's provisions, no record should be destroyed that is necessary to comply with requirements of the state Sunset Act, audit requirements, or any legal notice or subpoena.
- The agency should maintain full documentation of any computerized record-keeping system it employs. It should develop procedures for: (1) backing up all permanent records held in electronic format; (2) storing a back-up copy off-site; and (3) migrating all permanent records when the system is upgraded or replaced. If the agency chooses to maintain permanent records solely in electronic format, it is committed to funding any system upgrades and migration strategies necessary to ensure the records' permanent preservation and accessibility.
- Electronic mail contain permanent, temporary, or transitory record information. Although e-mail records can be printed out, filed, and retained according to the RDA's requirements, the division should preferably employ an electronic records management system capable of sorting e-mail into folders and archiving messages having long-term value.
- The staff of the State Records Commission or the Examiners of Public Accounts may examine the condition of the permanent records maintained in the custody of the agency and inspect records destruction documentation. Government Records Division archivists are available to instruct the agency staff in RDA implementation and otherwise assist the agency in implementing its records management program.

The State Records Commission adopted this revision to the Records Disposition Authority on April 24, 2013.

---

Steve Murray, Chairman  
State Records Commission

---

Date

Receipt acknowledged:

---

Jim Reddoch, Commissioner  
Alabama Department of Mental Health

---

Date