

RESEARCH RECORDS RETENTION POLICY

Purpose:

The goals of this research records retention policy are to:

1. Archive and retain research records for reference and future use;
2. Delete research records that are no longer necessary;
3. Organize research records for efficient retrieval; and
4. Determine what records should be retained, where the records should be stored, and when and how the records should be destroyed.

Types of Records:

Records can be categorized by types and shall be classified into three types: Temporary Records, Final Records, and Permanent Records (Table 1). Based on type, research records are maintained for specific periods (Table 2 on Page 2).

Table 1. Types of Records

Types of Records	Examples
Temporary Records	Records associated with the research process such as correspondence (including e-mail) with research requestors
Final Records	Completed research request form, general agreement, reporting agreement, research proposal, approved IRB, court orders, final report
Permanent Records	Final reports, one hard copy and one electronic copy for each

Policy:

Temporary Research Records are to be retained by the Research Unit for one year after completion of the research study and the submission of the final report. Final Records are to be retained by the Research Unit for five years after completion of the research study and the submission of the final report. Permanent Records are to be retained indefinitely by the Research Unit in a hard copy and electronically after completion of the research study and the submission of the final report.

During a research project, research records should be stored and indexed so that they can be identified and retrieved easily. Permanent electronic copies should be stored in the Research Unit webpage while permanent hard copies should be stored in the Research Unit library. Research records should be destroyed when agreed retention periods expire. All expired electronic records should be destroyed from their respective record folders, and the expired hard copies should be shredded.

Table 2. Retention Schedule

Record Items	Description	Retention Period
Research request form	Signed research request form submitted by researcher should be stored in the final record folder.	5 Years
DCFS research agreement forms	Both signed copies of the general agreement form and the reporting agreement forms should be stored in the final record folder.	5 Years
Cover Letter	A cover letter along with research request packet should be stored in the final record folder.	5 Years
Research Proposal	Research proposal along with addendum or amendment, if applicable, should be stored in the final record folder.	5 Years
Letter of Support	Letter of support from researcher's manager if researcher is a DCFS employee or external researcher. The letter should be stored in the final record folder.	5 Years
IRB Application	Researcher's application packet to the IRB for approval of the research project should be stored in the final record folder.	5 Years
IRB Approval Letter	Approval letter from IRB should be stored in the final record folder.	5 Years
DCFS Approval Letter	Approval letter from the DCFS Research Unit should be stored in the final record folder.	5 Years
Superior Court Petition	As applicable, the researcher's application for court approval for a research project should be stored in the final record folder.	5 Years
Superior Court Request for Review	As applicable, if the DCFS Research Unit received an inquiry from the Superior Court regarding research projects, the inquiry should be stored in the final record folder.	5 Years
Response to Superior Court	As applicable, the DCFS Research Unit's response to the inquiry from Superior Court regarding research projects should be stored in the final record folder.	5 Years
Court Order	As applicable, the Court Approval Document for the research project should be stored in the final record folder.	5 Years
Letter of Project Approval	The DCFS Research Unit should send out a project approval letter to researcher. The approval letter should be stored in the final record folder.	5 Years
Final Report	After the completion of a research project, the researcher should submit a copy of the final report as agreed. A hard copy should be stored in the Research Unit library as a permanent record. An electronic copy should be stored in the Research Unit webpage as a permanent record.	Indefinite
Semi-Annual Status	If the approved project has been in progress for 6 months or longer and is expected to last for at least one year or more, the researcher should provide the DCFS Research Unit with a brief status report on the progress of the project. The status report should be stored in the temporary records folder.	1 Year