


Managing Case Files Effectively


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Case File Definition

- Information about one “case”
- Various types of information
- Records from many sources
 - Usually filed together




Examples of Case Files

□ Individuals	□ Events or Projects
□ Personnel	□ Capital projects
□ Social Services	□ Parcels
□ Student	□ Investigation
□ Medical	□ Infrastructure
□ Legal	□ Planning


File Structures

- Simple
- Segmented
- Virtual






Case File Structure Advantages

- Quicker access
- Single series to maintain
- Diverse materials filed together



Common Case File Problems

- Poor organization of files(system)
- Missing master list of subject terms
- No policies and procedures
- Overcrowded with inactive records
- Antiquated filing cabinets
- Top-tab filing supplies
- Lack of automated retrieval



Poor Case File Management

- Loses documents and information
- Wastes staff time
- Takes valuable office space
- Damages records
- Adds needless costs
- Reflects poorly on the organization

Benefits of Efficient Case Files

- Records filed accurately
- Files found quickly
- Easier to use and trust
- Saves space, time and money
- Cost-effective public service
- Positive image of government

Media Formats for Case Files

- Paper
- Microfilm
- Digital images
- Electronic files
- Hybrid systems

Paper

- Most common medium
- Familiar to people
- Takes up most space
- Used during any part of life cycle
- Requires strict physical security
- Preservation is usually simpler



Digital Image Case Files

- Scanned TIFF images or PDF/A files
- Integrated into ECMS
- Frequent, rapid retrieval
- Enhanced management and security
- Requires planning and controls





Electronic Case Files

- Born-digital files
- Often integrated into ECMS or part of independent system
- Avoids cost of imaging
- Conversion to non-proprietary formats
- Not solution for every situation





Microfilm Case Files

- Often used for inactive files
- File integrity and security
- Access challenges
- Preservation tool





Hybrid Solutions

- Any combination of formats
- Will vary based on . . .
 - Nature of case file series
 - Existing records and systems
- May change over time as . . .
 - Paper records are digitized
 - New systems are implemented



Case Files Management

- Creation and content
- Access
- Confidentiality and security
- Physical management
- Retention and disposition



Creation and Content

- Creation and closure protocols
 - When and how to set up and close files
- Sub-series divisions
 - Retention periods
 - Other practical purposes
- Content control
 - What records or data are included

Access

- Filing equipment
- Bar coding
- Database
- Conversion to electronic files in ECMS



Lateral Filing Cabinets



Lateral Shelving



Rotary Shelving



Compact File Storage



Mechanized File Storage

Barcoding

- Simple way to track files
- Used in large systems
- For files with many users
- Especially useful for active files



Database Tracking to Improve Access

- Greater control
- Multiple access points
- Automated retrieval (including bar coding)
- Enhances inactive file management



Possible Data Fields

- Case title (person name; project title)
- Case number
- Dates case opened/closed
- Case manager
- Location
- Date of disposition
- File status



Convert Case Files to Improve Access

- Transform filing systems
 - Improved filing equipment
 - End tab folders with color coding
 - Impose new organization or system
- Scan and access via ECMS
- Integrate born-digital systems

Confidentiality and Security

- Analyze confidentiality ahead of time
- Maintain a list of confidential records
- Maintain procedures for confidentiality
- Set levels of access in electronic system

Physical Management Challenges

- Files take up enormous space
- Difficult to add folders to middle
- Difficult to manage filing and re-filing

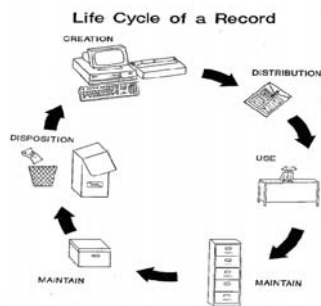
Physical Management

- Update filing systems
- Implement filing policies and procedures
- Convert to digital systems as practical
- Refile docs and purge duplicates regularly
- Transfer to inactive storage on schedule

Management Issues

- Managing through life cycle
- Policies and Procedures
- Filing Manual
- Retention and disposition
- Appraisal

Managing through Life Cycle



- Creation
- Active use
- Inactive storage
- Disposition

Retention and Disposition Challenges

- Multiple retention periods within files
- Requires multiple dispositions
- Files become inactive at various times



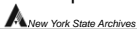
Retention and Disposition Solutions

- Segment files by retention
- Don't integrate certain records into case files
- Weed records from files
- Pull files as they become inactive
- Box inactive records by retention




Retention and Disposition

- Student records example
 - 6 years after graduation many records purged
 - Permanent records retained forever
- Considerations
 - Separate permanent from non-permanent records at creation
 - File together and purge at specified time
 - Retain non-permanent records in paper and scan all permanent documents (or convert born-digital)



Retention and Disposition



- Police investigation case files example
 - Homicides, suicides, missing persons, etc . . . Permanent
 - Other felonies . . . 25 years
 - Misdemeanors . . . 5 years
- Considerations
 - Separate records by offense at creation
 - Digitize at creation




Personnel Case File Retention Sheet



Application form and letter	Discard
Appointment letter	Permanent
Benefits information	Discard
Contracts (for superintendent)	Permanent
Declination to join retirement system	Permanent
Job descriptions	Permanent
Insurance information	Discard
Letter of recommendation from district	Discard
Letter of resignation from employee	Discard
Memos (relating to discipline, etc.)	Discard
Oath of office	Permanent
Reference letters	Discard
Resume	Discard
Salary information	Permanent
Teaching certificate	Permanent
Transcript from college	Permanent

*6 years following an employee's departure.

Case File Policies and Procedures

- Controls creation, content and disposition
- Improves access
- Reduces misfiles and duplicates
- Training tool
- Critical in court

What to Include?

- Responsibilities
- Structure and organization
- Steps in establishing a file
- Records to include and their order
- File update procedures
- Access restrictions
- Transfer, retention and disposition

Developing File Manuals


- Control records
- Improve access
- Reduce misfiles
- Reduce bulk
- Train personnel

What to Include?

- Responsibilities
- Steps in establishing a file
- What records included in file
- File order of records
- Updating files


More to Include

- Retention periods for various records
- Purging rules
- Access restrictions
- Records storage




Appraisal Challenges

- Some not scheduled as permanent
- Too voluminous to save all files
- Large files, hard to use effectively
- Expensive to keep all files
- Need to save a useful set of records




Appraisal Solutions

- Culling from each file
- Careful appraisal
- Sampling
- State Archives help




Sampling Methods

- Set criteria to identify files
- Choose portions of the file
- Random



Conclusions

- Case files exist out of convenience
- But also offer some challenges
- There are some strategies for managing case files effectively



Questions?

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Thank you!