



Board Letter

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**Agenda Date:** March 17, 2026

**Agenda #:** 7

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Authorization to amend the CHA Records Retention Policy.

Presenter: Elizabeth Silas, Interim Chief Legal Officer

**Recommendation**

The Operating Chairman ("OC") of the Chicago Housing Authority ("CHA") recommends that the CHA Board of Commissioners ("Board") approve the attached revised Records Retention Policy.

The requested action complies in all material respects with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, and CHA policies. CHA staff has completed all necessary due diligence to support the submission of this initiative. Policy changes go into effect upon Board approval.

**Background**

As part of a comprehensive policy review process, CHA has streamlined and updated previous Board-approved policies to comply with current laws, regulations and practices. This policy updates, combines and supersedes CHA's current Records Retention Policy which was adopted in December 2014.

Key revisions include:

- Removes procedure to the extent practicable and allows for a separate statement of implementing procedures.
- Adds "Definitions" to clarify key terms in the policy.
- Adds reference to handling of electronic documents.
- Clarifies the policy application to all staff, employees, or equivalent personnel, and all vendors, agents, contractors who create, maintain, and store records on behalf of CHA.

Respectfully Submitted:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. Brewer", is written over a horizontal line.

**Matthew Brewer**  
**Operating Chairman**



**Agenda #: 7**


**RESOLUTION NO. 2026-CHA-17**

**WHEREAS,** the Board of Commissioners has reviewed the Board Letter dated March 17, 2026, entitled "Authorization to amend the CHA Records Retention Policy".

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE CHICAGO HOUSING AUTHORITY:**

**THAT,** the Board of Commissioners approves the attached, revised CHA Records Retention Policy and authorizes the Operating Chairman, or his designee, to implement the revised CHA Records Retention Policy on March 17, 2026. This revised CHA Records Retention Policy shall supersede all prior policies regarding the same subject matter.



  
James Matanky  
Vice Chairman  
Chicago Housing Authority



## RECORDS RETENTION POLICY

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| <b>Responsible CHA Department(s): ITS/OGC</b>                           | <b>Policy No. 102.5</b>   |
| <b>Effective Date: March 17, 2026</b>                                   | Approved on 03/17/2026 by CHA Board of Commissioners Resolution No. 2026CHA17 |
| This policy supersedes the Records Management Policy (eff. 12/16/2014). |   |

### I. Purpose.

This Policy provides guidance for the Chicago Housing Authority to maintain, store, make accessible, and dispose of CHA Records. All CHA employees, contractors and agents, who create, maintain, and store Records on behalf of CHA, are responsible for understanding and complying with this Policy and CHA's Records Retention and Management Procedure Manual ("Records Retention Manual"). Failure to adhere to this Policy and the procedures set forth in the Records Retention Manual may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment from CHA.

### II. General Provisions.

#### A. Definitions

1. "Record" means any documented material regardless of physical form, that is generated or received by the CHA in connection with transacting business, including but not limited to paper documents, video, and electronic documents generated by any computer program including but not limited to Microsoft Outlook (including e-mails and calendars), Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Word, Microsoft Teams, Yardi, I-File, and Adobe PDF. A Record can be classified in various terms such as Historical, Vital, and Confidential. Within these classifications, other subcategories may exist such as emails, collaborative applications, or video Records.

Such Records can be worthy of temporary or permanent preservation because of their historic or research value which could include minutes, resolutions, and plat maps. It could be considered essential to the operation of CHA and without the Record CHA's business would be significantly impaired or could not survive a catastrophe such as financial and legal documents. A Record could contain information that is exclusively for the use and information of CHA in the performance of its duties and is required to be kept confidential. Such information would include social security numbers, medical or credit histories, employment, personal references, criminal records, and information acquired by the CHA from applicants, tenants, their family members, or any third party concerning the applicants or tenants. Records, whether in physical or electronic form, must adhere to the retention and destruction protocols of the Records Retention Manual.

2. "Historical Records" are Records that document the history of the CHA and contain significant information about persons, places, events, and the CHA's development over time. Examples of Historical Records include, but are not limited to, board meeting minutes, resolutions, ordinances, plat maps, policies and annual reports, blueprints and surveys,

photos, litigation, real estate records, and leases.

3. "Vital Records" are official Records that are considered essential to the operation of the Authority and cannot be recreated.

4. "Confidential Records" are Records containing information that is exclusively for the use and information of CHA in the performance of its duties. Examples of Confidential Records include, but are not limited to, attorney-client communications, litigation documents, documents created using artificial intelligence (i.e. ChatGPT), and sensitive personal information (i.e. social security numbers, medical or credit reports, personal references, employment records, criminal records, and the information acquired by the CHA from applicants, tenants, their family members, or any third-party concerning CHA applicants or tenants).

5. "Environmental Records" are Records containing information related to the description of a CHA site, that includes but is not limited to an evaluation of a site's environmental effect and compliance with the applicable environmental statutes and authorities.

6. "Active Records" are Records that are regularly referred to and used to conduct CHA's daily operations. This includes Records in any physical or electronic form. The active period reflects the period during which the Record is expected to be maintained in the office files of the Office of Record (the department responsible for maintaining the record).

7. "Inactive Records" are Records that are not needed for current use or reference, but should be kept for legal, tax, audit, or historical purposes. Generally, Inactive Records will be kept off-site and may be accessed frequently. The inactive period identifies the time during which the physical Records will be maintained in off-site storage at the Records Center and the time which electronic Records will be maintained in a centralized Cloud designation.

8. "Life Cycle" means the series of stages in form and functional activity through which the Record passes through a specified primary stage between Active to Inactive to reach the final stage of closure and destruction.

9. "Records Manager" means the individual appointed by the Information Technology Security Division (ITS) to perform the functions set forth in this Policy and in the Records Retention Manual.

10. "Record Liaisons" means the departmental contacts in each department of CHA responsible for the overall management and maintenance of Active and Inactive Records, assisting in identifying Inactive Records ready for storage, and making Inactive Records available for required reviews.

11. "Records Center" means an area designated pursuant to the Records Retention Manual that is utilized for organized storage, control, protection, and retrieval of Inactive Records for a specified period of time.

## **B. Applicability.**

This Policy applies to all operating and functional areas of the CHA. It also provides guidelines for CHA affiliates who will define and manage their own records programs. The Policy should cover all Records, in hardcopy, video, and electronic format, produced by or for the CHA. It applies to the CHA, including all staff, employees or equivalent personnel, as well as to all CHA's vendors, agents and contractors (and their respective subcontractors or agents), including Private Property

Management firms, HCV administrators, construction management firms and other firms or individuals fulfilling or performing CHA core functions.

### **III. General Policy**

#### **A. Record Management.**

Records, regardless of their physical form, should be managed responsibly throughout their life cycle. Responsible management of Records includes labeling each Record according to its nature when appropriate (i.e. drafts, Confidential, attorney/client privileged), and identified with their type (Vital, Historic, or Confidential) and their life cycle stage (Active or Inactive), and maintained, stored, tracked, and disposed of in accordance with this Policy and the Records Retention Manual. Responsible management of Records also requires making reasonable efforts to ensure that Records are secured to prevent unauthorized access, damage, or loss.

#### **B. Record Retention.**

Records related to the CHA's legal obligations, whether in physical or electronic form, shall be retained for certain periods of time, as required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Federal Code of Regulations governing Public Housing Agencies, and the Local Records Commission of Cook County (LRCCC) pursuant to state law and regulations, specifically including those comprising the State of Illinois' Local Records Act, 50 ILCS 205, *et seq.*, and applicable regulations in Title 44, Part 4500 of the Illinois Administrative Code. Specific records retention periods for certain Active or Inactive Records and data may be extended under specific circumstances, including but not limited to, legal litigation holds and subpoena or litigation-related record freezes. Otherwise, Records should be maintained in accordance with the CHA's Retention Schedule, as established in the Records Retention Manual.

#### **C. Records Manager and CHA Retention.**

1. The Records Manager has overall responsibility for updating and implementing the Records Retention Manual in consultation with the CHA ITS and Office of the General Counsel (OGC), including a systemic defined manner for storing and disposing of Records, that is in compliance with applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations, as well as CHA's need to preserve Records for historical and reference purposes.
2. ITS and OGC will have oversight over the establishment of retention schedules, and reviews and approvals for the disposal of Records in accordance with Section VII.

#### **D. Retention Schedule.**

Retention schedule reviews and updates will be conducted in accordance with the Records Retention Manual.

#### **E. Department Records.**

Executive Leadership Team Chiefs are responsible for ensuring that their respective departments, agents, and contractors comply with all records management laws, regulations, and the Records Retention Manual. Designated officers of the CHA reserve the right to review CHA Records at any time to confirm compliance with this Policy and the Records Retention Manual.

## **F. Records Liaisons.**

Records Liaisons are responsible for the proper completion of documentation for Inactive Records sent to and retrieved from storage, consistent with the Records Retention Manual. CHA reserves the right to review CHA Records at any time to confirm compliance with this Policy and the Records Retention Manual.

## **IV. Types and Stages of Records**

### **A. Types of Records**

#### **1. Historical Records.**

The maintenance, use, and retention of Historical Records will be governed by the Records Retention Manual.

#### **2. Vital Records.**

Vital Records will be identified so that they can be protected and kept until the expiration of their retention periods, if any. Vital Records may be disposed of upon receiving the required approvals established in the Records Retention Manual.

#### **3. Confidential Records.**

Special care should be taken to secure Confidential Records from unauthorized access. Confidential Records shall be stored and maintained consistently with the CHA's Social Security Number and Personally Identifiable Information Protection Policy and the Records Retention Manual. Confidential Records may be disposed of only upon receiving the required approvals established in the Records Retention Manual. Confidential Records approved for destruction are to be shredded and/or removed from electronic access.

#### **4. Environmental Records**

Environmental Records will be identified so that they can be protected and kept until their expiration of their retention periods, if any. To the extent that environmental records may be classified as any other type of record (historical, vital, confidential), such records will be governed in accordance with the Records Retention Manual.

### **B. Stages of Records**

#### **1. Active Records.**

Filing System. Each department may determine its own filing system for Active Records, which is consistent with the Records Retention Manual.

Physical Storage. Active Records, which are in physical form, are to be kept in the office files in compliance with the Records Retention Manual.

Electronic Storage. Active Records in electronic format are to be kept in a secured folder with strictive access to protect its confidential nature in compliance with the Records Retention Manual.

## **2. Inactive Records.**

Transfer of Records to Inactive Storage. Active Records transition to Inactive Records when they are no longer needed for current use or reference, but should be kept for legal, tax, audit, or historical purposes. Transfers of Inactive Records to physical or electronic storage should be conducted by the CHA's Records Manager under the procedures outlined in the Records Retention Manual.

Tracking. The Records Manager is responsible for the maintenance of a comprehensive list of Records sent to storage, including the identification of the Office of Record and the classification of the Record (*i.e.*, Vital, Historical, and/or Confidential) consistent with the Records Retention Manual.

Filing System. Each Inactive Record transferred to storage should be maintained consistent with the Records Retention Manual.

Physical Storage. Inactive Records will be kept at the CHA's designated Records Center. The Records Center will be the storage location for Inactive Records, where they will be maintained and disposed of in accordance with the Records Procedure Manual.

Electronic Storage. Inactive Records will be kept in a centralized Cloud designation at the CHA where they will be maintained and disposed of in accordance with the Records Retention Manual.

## **C. Email and Collaborative Applications.**

CHA routinely utilizes email and collaborative applications, including but not limited to Microsoft Office applications (Teams, Outlook, SharePoint, Excel, Word, etc.), Adobe PDF, and Yardi. While emails and communications via collaborative applications may be considered temporary communications that can be routinely deleted, these communications and/or documents can be still be considered a Record as defined above. Emails and communications via collaborative applications that are Records are subject to applicable retention periods and procedures outlined in the Records Retention Manual.

## **D. Video Recordings.**

Video recordings may also be maintained, used, and retained by CHA to perform operational functions. Depending on the type of video recordings, specific procedures and retention periods will be established in the Records Retention Manual.

## **V. Access to Records**

HUD and the Comptroller General of the United States, or any of their authorized representatives, and the contracted internal public auditor (IPA) will have reasonable access to non-privileged CHA books, documents, papers, and Records which are pertinent to its operations, including the right to make audits, examinations, excerpts and transcripts in accordance with the Records Retention Manual. Unless exempted by federal, state, or local law, CHA will also permit public access to its Records as part of the respective Federal Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. § 552) and Illinois Freedom of Information Act, 5 ILCS 140, *et seq.* (collectively referred to as "FOIA").

## VI. Retention of Records

- A. CHA Records retention periods will be set forth in the Records Retention Manual and will follow the requirements established by HUD, the applicable regulations in the Code of Federal Regulation governing records of Public Housing Agencies (24 CFR § 982.158), and the LRCCC pursuant to the Commission's authority under the Illinois Local Records Act (50 ILCS 205/1-15) and the applicable regulations in Title 44, Part 4500 of the Illinois Administrative Code.
- B. CHA will maintain and periodically update, at least once a year, a retention schedule that identifies the Active and Inactive period for each Record of the CHA. The Records Manager will be responsible for working with the LRCCC, the ITS Division, and OGC Division to establish an appropriate retention period for each Record. OGC will provide advice and counsel to the Records Manager as to revisions and updates to the Records Retention Manual, and the review and approval of retention schedules. As the delegate of the Chief Executive Officer, ITS and OGC working with the Records Manager, have overall responsibility for the retention and destruction of CHA Records.
- C. The Records Manager confers with ITS and OGC on Records retention-related reviews and approvals, subject to final approval from the LRCCC. Considerations in determining retention periods include legal requirements, government regulations, audit requirements, warranty or coverage periods, historic value, business requirements, and grant specifications.
- D. The OGC Division will provide advice and consultation regarding any new federal, state, and local government regulations regarding the retention of Records and information and on the identification of Confidential Records requiring shredding.
- E. The Records Manager has overall responsibility for updating the retention schedule. Executive Leadership Team Chiefs are responsible for ensuring that their respective departments' Active Records are maintained and Inactive Records are stored in accordance with the Records Retention Manual.

## VII. Disposal of Records

To save resources and improve efficiency, CHA may dispose of official physical or electronic Records in accordance with CHA's Records Retention Manual.

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| <b>References:</b> 5 U.S.C. § 552; 24 CFR Parts 5, 880, 882, 908, 982; 5 ILCS 140 <i>et seq.</i> ; 50 ILCS 205 <i>et seq.</i> ; 44 Ill. Adm. Code Part 4500 |
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| <b>Policy History:</b> |
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| Approved on 12/16/2014 by 2014CHA122 |
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| Revised on 03/17/2026 by 2026CHA17 |
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