

How to Appoint Records Officers

What is an Agency Records Officer?

A Records Officer Coordinates the Department's Records Management Program and ensures records management activities are performed in accordance with standards and procedures. All department records, regardless of media, must be maintained, scheduled, transferred and disposed of according to policies established by the Maine State Archives.

What are the Expectations of a Records Officer?

- Coordinate transfers of inactive and archival records to the State Records Center and Archives
- Act as liaison between the Records Center/State Archives and the agency
- Assigns card holders as needed and allows access to location numbers for containers stored at Records Center. Ensures that when cardholders leave the Department, the Records Center is notified so that privileges may be revoked.
- Coordinates transfers of records to the Maine State Archives and the Maine State Records Center.
- Authority to direct other agency employees concerning the management of records in their custody
- Implement and maintain the agency records management program
- Write agency inventories
- Create internal guidelines for maintaining and using agency records (Inventories, File Plans)
- Conduct regular reviews of existing agency records schedules
- Prepare and submit draft agency schedules
- Identify areas of need and arrange for staff training
- Maintain files of records retention schedules, disposition authorizations, and records transfers
- Sign Records Management forms

What are the Qualifications of a Records Officer?

- Thorough knowledge of agency functions, the records created to fulfill those functions and the schedules which define the retention and disposition of the records
- Where records can be located and who is the custodian of the records
- Knowledge of common file classification conventions including digital filing systems
- Knowledge of retention scheduling procedures
- Ability to gain cooperation from all Department employees involved in records storage, retrieval, and disposal

How Many Records Officers Does Our Department Need?

It depends on the structure of your Department. Each Department can be broken into divisions, bureaus or other subsets which provide a particular service and have their own functions and policies. Assigning only one RO per Department which possibly has several diverse bureaus could lead to unrealistic oversight. And how much "thorough" knowledge would one person have over the entire department's records? Therefore, it is our recommendation that each separately functional unit would appoint a Records Officer who would have oversight over the records in that particular section.

Here is an example:

The Department of Food has a Records Officer in the main office. Within the Department of Food is the Division of Fruits, Division of Vegetables, Division of Dairy and the Division of Meats – each of these Divisions is a separately functioning unit with distinct policies and records, therefore they would each have their own Records Officer. The Records Officer at the Department level might have knowledge of office or personnel procedures that would apply to all employees but would most likely not have thorough knowledge of each of the Divisions records.

A couple things to note:

- There should not be more than one RO within a functional unit where there is the possibility of conflicting schedules being adopted or other duplicate records planning within the same unit which would not serve its functions and policies as a whole. There should be one liaison to Records Management.
- Assistants would be assigned dependent upon the geographic or functional structure of the agency. It should not be based entirely on numbers of agency personnel but specific roles and functions of the personnel within the agency and outlying regional offices.

Who Should Be a Records Officer?

The Records Officer exercises authority on the Commissioner's behalf. If the Records Officer cannot be a direct report to the Commissioner or head of the Department/Bureau (this is the ideal situation), there should be no more than one reporting step between them. Examples of appropriately chosen RO positions are: Administrative Secretary to the Commissioner; or Assistant to a Director. Examples of inappropriately chosen RO positions are: Clerk Typist in the Department's Administrative Services section.