

Record Retention Simplified – The Ultimate Guideline

Record retention can be a significant problem for healthcare groups. Different federal and state regulations require different retention schedules for medical records and other medical-service related documents. Many managers and physicians are confused on how long they should maintain records and how best to store all this paper. Here's an updated record retention schedule that is in sync with medical malpractice insurers (check with your malpractice carrier) and accounting firms.

There are all kinds of numbers floating around for retaining records, but unless you are focusing **ONLY** on record retention, you'd have to be very organized to separate what can be shredded in 1 year, 3 years, 6 years, 7 years, etc. I prefer to categorize everything into three basic categories: **Save it Forever**, **Save it for 7 years**, and **Save it according to state requirements**. Here is (almost) everything broken into my three categories.

Corporate Paperwork & Financials: Save all permanently

- Letters of Incorporation
- Bylaws
- Capital Stock
- Shareholder's Agreements
- Copyright and Trademark Information
- Legal Correspondence
- Minutes
- Auditors Report
- Annual Financial Statements

- General Ledgers
- Depreciation Schedules
- Important Correspondence
- Licenses
- Loan documents
- Property documents
- Tax records
- Retirement Plan documents
- OSHA Medical Records for employee accidents/exposure – 30 years so you may as well keep them forever
- Worker's Compensation Records – 11 years so you may as well keep them forever

Accounting Records & Miscellaneous Records: 7 years

- Human Resource Records – 7 years after termination (keep applications and resumes for non-hirees for 1 year)
- Accounts Payable records
- Bank Statements
- Canceled Checks
- Contracts and Leases (after expiration)
- Electronic Fund Transfers
- Accounts Payable original invoices
- Payroll Records
- Other benefit records
- Sales records (for goods such as vitamins, supplements, or books)
- Reimbursement records for employee expenses
- EOBs from payers
- Encounter Forms or other Billing Records (HIPAA requires Covered Entities retain billing records for 6 years)

Patient Medical Records – guided by state regulation or physician preference, whichever is longer

Adults Recommended: permanently – or a minimum of 10 years after the last encounter

Minors Recommended: permanently – or a minimum of statute of limitation past the age of majority (check your state)

Providers of Medicare Advantage programs must keep patient records for 10 years

Keeping it All Together the Manage My Practice Way

So, how do you keep from drowning in all that paper? Savvy practices scan their paperwork into offsite data centers that give them security, redundancy and easy accessibility, as well as potentially turning dead space into revenue-producing space.

There are many generic solutions for data storage, but Manage My Practice has partnered with Box to serve the special needs of healthcare practices and related service-providers. The package provides practices with the training, organizational set-up, and support to store everything (and I do mean everything) securely for as little as \$120/month with upload and download encryption and no space limitations. **Box** is the leader in data storage and security and Manage My Practice is the name you know and trustBox for a test drive, contact Abraham Whaley at abe@managemypractice.com or Mary Pat at marypat@managemypractice.com.

