

Roman Catholic Diocese of Dallas – Records Management Policy

GENERAL

It is the policy of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Dallas (hereafter referred to as “Diocese”) to properly identify, arrange, maintain, safeguard, and retain records in accordance with the requirements of existing federal, state, and Canon Law. This policy covers all records and documents regardless of physical form or characteristic, which have been created or received by the Diocese in connection with both its spiritual and temporal affairs.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Records Management Policy is to establish guidelines with respect to the maintenance, use, retention, disposition, and preservation of appropriate diocesan documents and records, and to assign responsibility for administering the function within the organization.

OBJECTIVES

1. To ensure that records required for the protection and efficient operation of the business of the Diocese, including those required by Canon Law, are retained. Care should be given to ensure documents are not prematurely destroyed, lost, or stolen because (1) numerous federal and state statutes, as well as Canon Law, require that certain categories of records and documents must be kept for specified time periods; (2) records may be required to support or define legal claims brought by or against the Diocese; and (3) availability of information is required to efficiently manage daily activities.
2. To ensure the records that outlive their usefulness are promptly discarded. Retention of documents for longer than the period of time required for legal or business purposes can cost the Diocese substantial sums for storage space, equipment, supplies, and personnel; and result in potentially serious legal ramifications.
3. To help promote a responsible attitude toward records on the part of employees.

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SCOPE

This policy applies to all official departments and parishes of the Diocese.

All records created or received in the course of official business are the property of the Diocese.

Vital records, such as Sacramental Records, and important records such as those having legal, financial, administrative, or historical value.

Records used in this policy refer to all recorded information (both physical and digital) including documents, letters, maps, books, photographs, films, sound recordings, tapes (magnetic and otherwise), electronic data processing records, images, emails sent and received, data bases, and other documentary material created, received, maintained or preserved by any department or employee of the Diocese in the course of transaction of business or ministry or in pursuit of its legal obligations.

The records maintained by the Diocese facilitate the information needs of employees and are not a public resource. The confidentiality of records and proprietary information must be protected. Certain restrictions on access to records within the Diocese may be imposed.

The Diocese acknowledges Canon Law 486 which mandates “all diocesan and parochial documents must be protected with the greatest of care.”

ADMINISTRATION

1) Ownership of Records:

All records created or preserved by a department, employee or representative of the Diocese in the course of employment or in the transaction of diocesan business are solely the property of the Diocese.

2) Conservation of Records:

No records shall be removed, destroyed, transferred, stored, or converted to another media or otherwise disposed of except in compliance with diocesan policies.

3) Retention Periods:

Retention periods outlined in the Pastoral Center Records Retention Schedule are

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absolute, except when legally halted by official notice. They are not minimum guidelines. There are no exceptions.

4) Electronic Records:

Records generated and/or stored electronically, including images and emails are subject to these policies in the same manner as printed documents. Retention decisions will be based on the content of the electronic record in the same manner as a printed document. As is the case with all records, they must be accessible and retrievable for the stated retention period. As technology advances, software can change and become outdated and inaccessible. As new operating systems and software are upgraded, it is imperative to ensure that records are migrated to the new systems. Prior to a system upgrade all records will be backed up to ensure integrity and that no records are inadvertently destroyed or lost.

5) Conversion of Records to Electronic Medium:

Paper records may be scanned or otherwise transferred to an approved electronic medium. When the conversion is complete the paper records will be destroyed.

6) Disposal of Expired Records:

Each year, normally the last week of June which coincides with the end of the fiscal year, the Pastoral Center will close from all outside business to perform an annual records cleanup. Each department and parish will dispose of records whose retention period has expired. Records may be shredded or, if electronic, deleted or destroyed by another approved method. Arrangements will be made for commercial shredding. A copy of the Certificate of Destruction will be executed and signed by the department head. One copy should be sent to Archives and the other retained by the department.

7) Off Site Storage of Inactive Records:

Physical records that are generally inactive but must be retained permanently or for a set period of time will be stored off site unless they are stored in an imaging system. Records will be prepared for storage annually during the clean-up event.

8) Responsibility:

The Bishop of the Diocese, or his delegate, interprets this policy. The Chancellor of the Diocese administers this policy. All diocesan parishes, departments, and offices comply with and implement this policy.