Develop Written Policies and Procedures

Dear Reader:

The following document was created from the MTAS website (mtas.tennessee.edu). This website is maintained daily by MTAS staff and seeks to represent the most current information regarding issues relative to Tennessee municipal government.

We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with municipal government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other MTAS website material.

Sincerely,

The University of Tennessee
Municipal Technical Advisory Service
1610 University Avenue
Knoxville, TN 37921-6741
865-974-0411 phone
865-974-0423 fax
www.mtas.tennessee.edu

Table of Contents

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Step Three: Develop Writtten Policies and Procedures

Both large and small offices can benefit from having written records management policies on certain issues. The policies should adopt the records retention schedules in this manual; incorporate any RDAs developed by your office; and include policies for dealing with inactive records, for allowing public access to records and guidelines for making copies, for responding to emergencies that threaten records, for maintaining confidential records, for keeping records in alternative storage media, and for interacting with the county public records commission, the State Library and Archives, and a records center or archive if one exists in your city. MTAS recommends that personnel records, other than personnel records of undercover police officers, be kept in the central office repository by the records custodian, rather than by the different departments. Having personnel records scattered in different departments can lead to problems, including lost files and parts of files.

If you think your office has had or may have a problem with files being lost, stolen or misplaced, develop a policy and procedures for tracking files as well. Require anyone removing a file from its storage space to fill out a sign-out sheet indicating who they are, what record they are taking, and the dates of its removal and return. This procedure should help your office track misplaced records and cut down on losses. If you have an active records manager in your city, he or she may already have developed policies on some of these issues. In that case, you could simply incorporate those policies into your office procedures.

Municipalities have a great deal of flexibility in adopting the retention schedule recommended in this publication. It can be adopted by ordinance, resolution, motion, citywide policy or a records commission if the city has one; or applicable portions can be adopted as departmental policy.

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