

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about GRS 2.4, Employee Compensation and Benefits Records

July 2017

INTRODUCTION

1. What is the purpose of GRS 2.4?

This schedule provides disposition authority for records an agency creates and receives when processing payroll and administering employee benefit programs that involve transferring funds or other tangible benefits to individual employees.

2. Whom do I contact for further information about this schedule?

Please contact NARA's General Records Schedules Team at GRS_Team@nara.gov with questions about this schedule.

3. How does GRS 2.4 differ from the old GRS?

GRS 2.4 supersedes or rescinds nearly all of old GRS 2. It also supersedes items in old GRS 1 and 9. Recognizing that payroll processing is now an almost entirely electronic process, this schedule merges many old items to create new records management efficiencies. It rescinds items that refer to records agencies no longer create. It combines in a single schedule all records about transferring money to employees, whether in salary and wages, or benefits expressed in financial remuneration. (See also question 5.) This schedule also adds new items not previously covered by the GRS. New items include records of child care subsidy programs and Family Medical Leave Act programs.

4. Why did you rescind old GRS items?

We rescinded seven old GRS items for these reasons:

- GRS 1, item 35b1 (N1-GRS-88-2, item 1b1) is replaced by GRS 2.4, item 110. Because item 110 contains filing instructions rather than disposition instructions, it cannot become a schedule item in ERA. Since we cannot technically supersede the old item, we must therefore rescind it.
- GRS 2, item 1a (N1-GRS-92-4, item 1a) was an instruction to make sure an employee's pay record always remains current. Since it did not state whether the records are permanent or temporary—or even where to file them—it was inappropriate for inclusion in a records schedule, so has been removed.
- GRS 2, item 2 (N1-GRS-92-4, item 2) gave system administrators the right to periodically dispose of system data after long-term records were downloaded and safeguarded. However, GRS 5.1, item 020, allows agencies to dispose of anything left in an electronic system, as a non-recordkeeping copy, once long-term records are appropriately saved. Therefore, the old item is no longer necessary.
- GRS 2, items 14a, 14b, and 14c (N1-GRS-92-4, items 14a, 14b, and 14c) describe records no longer being created. Payroll deduction for purchasing paper savings bonds was discontinued in 2010. New GRS 2.4, item 010, instead covers records of payroll e-deductions to purchase Treasury bonds via the TreasuryDirect system.

- GRS 2, item 23b (N1-GRS-92-4, item 23b) describes records that agencies should no longer have or create. Now, the process of instituting a change in a previous payroll record is handled electronically. The electronic system retains the record of the change in an individual's profile. The old item covered extra paper copies in the payroll processing office. If such records are ever created now (and they should not be), they are disposable as input records under GRS 5.2, item 020, Intermediary records.

GENERAL QUESTION

5. How does this schedule relate to GRS 2.3 (Employee Relations Records) and GRS 2.7 (Employee Health and Safety Records)?

Some series of records in GRS 2.3 (for instance, those created in alternative dispute resolution) and GRS 2.7 (for example, those created under the Employee Assistance Program) bear similarity to records in GRS 2.4. Two distinctions separate the 2.4 benefits from those in 2.3 and 2.7. First, and most importantly, the programs covered in 2.4 were established primarily for the benefit of employees, and sometimes as incentives to make Federal employment more attractive to a larger recruitment base. Programs covered in 2.3 and 2.7 were designed primarily to save the Government money, ensure an anti-discriminatory culture, or make it possible for employees to be more productive. The very real employee benefits that derive from these programs are a side-effect of the programs' primary goals. A second distinction is whether the benefit is calculated in dollars or some other tangible distribution. Programs that provide cash payments or other cash-value benefit (such as a mass transit card) are covered in GRS 2.4. Programs that provide other kinds of benefits to the employee (such as dispute resolution and counseling) are covered in GRS 2.3 and 2.7.

QUESTION RELATED TO "PAYROLL" SECTION ITEMS 010 TO 050

6. Who holds the record copy of records described in items 010 through 050: the agency or the payroll service provider?

The GRS is agnostic on ownership of and responsibility for the record copy. Responsibility for retention of records for the length of time required for each of these five items should be negotiated and agreed upon between an agency and its payroll services provider.

QUESTION RELATED TO ITEM 010

7. The records listed in this item look to me like system inputs. Why did you not cover them under GRS 5.2, item 020 (Intermediary records)?

GRS 2.4, item 010 only concerns *record* copies of documents listed in the series description. These record copies may be in electronic or paper form. If a payroll system receives paper, scans it, and enters it into the system, and the scanned electronic version is considered the record copy, then the paper is indeed system input covered by GRS 5.2, item 020.

QUESTION RELATED TO ITEM 030

8. Who is responsible for retaining time and attendance records for 3 years? The agency, or the payroll provider (if different from the agency)?

Every office involved in documenting employees' time worked is responsible for retaining the records it receives and creates for 3 years. Timekeepers in individual offices need to be able to document that the time and attendance information they sent to the payroll system provider was accurate. Only total hours of time worked and leave taken is forwarded to the payroll system provider. Backup documentation justifying those totals is usually retained by the timekeeper.

QUESTION RELATED TO ITEM 040

9. Old GRS 2, item 1b, "Individual Pay Record," has been recast as "Agency payroll for each pay period." Why does the item no longer refer to individuals?

GRS 2, item 1b, covered "Individual Pay Record, containing pay data on each employee within an agency." In the days that payroll was processed entirely on paper, an "individual earning and service card" (Optional Form 1127) did indeed track an individual's entire payroll history in a single spot. These very useful cards became a casualty of automation. They were largely gone by 1992 when GRS 2, item 1b, was last updated, yet the series description continued to imply that each Federal employee had an individual file associated with his or her name. The records produced by automation were instead pay-period batches of an agency's entire payroll for each of 26 pay periods per year, arranged within the batch by personal identifiers (generally Social Security numbers). But re-creation of a person's entire pay history has therefore been a laborious and time-intensive task necessitating access to potentially hundreds of record sets. In other words, while an "Individual Pay Record" attached to a single employee can be created from these records, no such standalone record exists without the research just described. New item 040 more correctly describes the content of each batch of records, linking them to records of *all* employees of an agency for a single pay period.

QUESTION RELATED TO ITEMS 100 AND 101

10. Why are records created and maintained by the Department of Labor (DOL) Office of Workers' Compensation not covered by these items?

Items 100 and 101 cover records agencies create about employee personnel injury compensation. At these agencies, the records are administrative in nature. DOL's Office of Workers' Compensation maintains personnel injury compensation records for employees across the Federal Government. As such, these records document how DOL carries out that mission. Therefore, DOL schedules these records on an agency-specific records schedule.

QUESTION RELATED TO ITEM 110

11. Why does this item have no disposition authority number?

Item 110 has no associated disposition authority number because it has no instruction either to destroy the records or to save them permanently. The instruction instead merely directs the user to place the records into the "appropriate retirement system." Their ultimate disposition is governed by a disposition authority connected to the retirement system records.

QUESTION RELATED TO ITEM 111

12. Old GRS 1, items 35a (Health benefits denied, not appealed) and 35b2 (Appeal unsuccessful - benefits denied) were retained for 3 years. The new retention period is only 1 year. Why the decrease in retention period?

These two old GRS items relate to benefits requests on behalf of former spouses. The retention period in the new GRS item reflects the instruction in OPM's Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Handbook regarding former spouses (<http://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/healthcare/reference-materials/reference/former-spouses/>), which states that agencies should retain these records for 1 year.