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# Scheduling Personal Data Records

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*Records Scheduling Guide 5*

National Archives and Records Administration  
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## About this Guide

This guide is for agency records managers and NARA appraisal archivists. Use it when scheduling and appraising personal data records. Use of this guide is not required. Always consult [NARA's appraisal criteria](#) when proposing the disposition of records.

### What are personal data records?

Personal data records contain information about an individual. They may also include information about an individual's family members.

Examples include:

- Personnel folders of federal employees and members of the armed services
- Files accumulated in connection with determining an individual's eligibility for federal government benefits
- Records that document immigration to the United States

### Considerations when scheduling personal data records

Take the following into account when considering the disposition of personal data records:

- **Size and nature of the population.** Records covering large sections of the population are more likely to be permanent. Records may also be permanent if they contain information about a subgroup, such as an ethnic or racial group or residents of a specific region.
- **Nature of the information.** Records that contain the information outlined below are more likely to be permanent. This information tends to be of high interest to researchers. The more of this information there is, the more valuable the record is.
  - previously used names;
  - date and place of birth, place(s) of residence;
  - date, place, and cause of death;
  - if foreign-born, date and place of arrival in the US, and if naturalized, date and place of naturalization;
  - names of parents;
  - dates and places of parents' births and deaths;
  - name(s) of spouse(s), date(s) and place(s) of marriage;

- names of children;
  - date and place of children's birth;
  - education level;
  - educational institutions attended and the dates;
  - occupation;
  - property ownership;
  - names of employers and work location(s);
  - military service, including branch of service, dates of service, and rank;
  - identification photographs of individuals.
- **Personally Identifiable Information (PII) and other privacy considerations.** Privacy concerns and FOIA restrictions typically do not factor into appraisal decisions. Most privacy rights expire upon a person's death. There are rare instances where privacy or legal requirements extend beyond death. NARA may schedule records as temporary if we will never be able to make them available to the public.

## **Retention Guidelines**

### **Transfer of permanent records**

NARA typically approves records for transfer to NARA between 15 and 30 years. For longer or shorter transfer periods, see [NARA Bulletin 2020-02: Guidance on Scheduling the Early and Late Transfer of Permanent Records](#).

### **Retention of temporary records**

Agencies should base the retention of temporary records on the agency's administrative, fiscal and legal needs for the records.

## **Related NARA Resources**

Code of Federal Regulations: [36 CFR Chapter XII, Part 1235](#) (Transfer of Records to the National Archives of the United States)

[Strategic Directions: Appraisal Policy](#) (excerpted from NARA Directive 1441)

[NARA Bulletin 2018-01](#): Updating [NARA Bulletin 2014-04](#), Format Guidance for the Transfer of Permanent Electronic Records