

Document Retention and Destruction Policy for VISTO

Purpose:

The purpose of this Document Retention and Destruction Policy is to ensure that VISTO (the "Organization") effectively manages its records in a way that complies with legal, regulatory, and operational requirements, while also protecting confidential and sensitive information. This policy establishes guidelines for the retention, storage, and destruction of the Organization's documents and records.

1. Scope

This policy applies to all records created or received by VISTO in the course of its operations, including physical documents, electronic files, emails, and any other form of record. It applies to all employees, volunteers, board members, and any third parties that may be involved in handling or managing the Organization's records.

2. Record Categories and Retention Periods

VISTO recognizes the need to retain certain documents for varying lengths of time based on legal, operational, and business requirements. Below are the primary categories of records maintained by the Organization, along with their retention periods.

Record Category	Retention Period	Description/Details
Financial Records	7 years (minimum)	Includes tax returns, financial statements, accounting records, invoices, and receipts.
Donor Records	7 years	Includes donor names, contact information, donation records, and correspondence.
Employee/Volunteer Records	7 years after termination of employment/volunteering	Includes personnel files, volunteer records, performance evaluations, and related documents.
Board of Directors Records	Permanent	Includes meeting minutes, agendas, bylaws, and board resolutions.
Grant Records	7 years after completion of the grant period	Includes applications, reports, correspondence, and records related to grants received.

Record Category	Retention Period	Description/Details
Contracts and Agreements	7 years after expiration or termination	Includes contracts, memorandums of understanding, and other agreements.
Legal and Compliance Documents	7 years after completion or expiration	Includes records related to legal matters, audits, and compliance filings.
Fundraising and Event Records	7 years	Includes event planning materials, donations, sponsorships, and promotional materials.
Program Records	3 years after program completion	Includes records related to program activities, client intake, and case management (if applicable).
Client Records	3 years after service provided	Includes client intake forms, eligibility documentation, and case files. (Note: Certain client records may be governed by confidentiality or legal requirements.)
Emails	3 years	Relevant correspondence related to official Organization matters.
Tax Records	7 years	Includes IRS filings (e.g., 990 forms), state tax filings, and related documentation.
Insurance Records	7 years after policy expiration	Includes insurance policies, claims, and related correspondence.
Property and Asset Records	Permanent or 7 years after disposal	Includes records of property ownership, leases, and asset management.

3. Storage and Protection of Records

All records should be stored in a safe and secure manner, whether physical or electronic, to protect the privacy and confidentiality of individuals and the integrity of the Organization's information.

- **Physical records** should be stored in a locked and secure location with limited access, such as filing cabinets or storage rooms. Only authorized personnel should have access to confidential or sensitive records.
 - **Electronic records** should be stored in secure cloud services or on servers with appropriate encryption and password protection. Access should be restricted to authorized personnel only, with permissions granted based on job responsibilities.
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4. Destruction of Documents

Once the retention period for a record has passed, it should be securely destroyed in a manner that ensures confidentiality and prevents unauthorized access or misuse.

- **Paper documents:** Shredding or burning is required to destroy physical records that are no longer needed.
- **Electronic records:** Files should be permanently deleted using data-wiping software that ensures data cannot be recovered. Backup copies of electronic records should also be destroyed in accordance with the same process.

In cases where the destruction of certain records is prohibited or restricted due to ongoing legal proceedings, investigations, or audits, the destruction should be postponed until clearance is received.

5. Confidentiality and Security

In accordance with privacy laws and best practices, all documents containing personally identifiable information (PII), financial data, and other sensitive information must be handled with the highest level of confidentiality. Access to confidential records should be strictly controlled, and only individuals with a need-to-know should have access to them.

Examples of sensitive or confidential records include:

- Donor information (names, addresses, financial contributions)
 - Client information (case files, intake forms, personal details)
 - Employee or volunteer personal information (social security numbers, health records)
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6. Disposal Procedures

Destruction of records should be performed in a manner that ensures compliance with legal, regulatory, and organizational requirements. All records must be disposed of by an authorized person, and the destruction should be logged, including the following information:

- Type of records destroyed
- Date of destruction
- Method of destruction
- Name of the individual overseeing the destruction process

A record of destruction should be maintained for auditing purposes.

7. Compliance with Legal Requirements

This policy is designed to comply with applicable laws and regulations concerning document retention, including tax laws, privacy laws, and other regulations that apply to nonprofit organizations. Where state or federal laws require longer retention periods, those requirements will take precedence over the general retention periods listed in this policy.

8. Policy Review and Updates

This Document Retention and Destruction Policy will be reviewed periodically by VISTO to ensure its compliance with legal requirements and its effectiveness in managing records. Any updates or amendments to the policy will be communicated to staff and volunteers and reflected in this document.

9. Questions or Concerns

For any questions related to this Document Retention and Destruction Policy, or to request clarification regarding the retention period for specific types of documents, please contact:

Executive Director

Phone: 940-668-6403

Email: ed@vistohelps.com

Mailing Address: PO Box 607, 76241

We thank you for helping us maintain the integrity and confidentiality of our records. Your cooperation in adhering to this policy is essential to ensure that our organization operates in a responsible and compliant manner.

This policy aims to foster an environment of transparency and accountability within VISTO. Thank you for your commitment to ethical conduct and the welfare of our community.