

**Policy No.** HR 408

# Personnel File Retention and Confidentiality

---

**Applies to:** All employees of Eastern Washington State Historical Society (EWSHS)

**References that apply to this policy:** Listed below are some, but not all, applicable governing requirements. Note: Laws and rules may change over time and such changes may take precedence over this policy.

- RCW 49.12.240-260: Employee inspection of personnel file
- RCW 41.06.450: Destruction or retention of information relating to employee misconduct
- Chapter 357-22 WAC
- HR Directive 13-01

**Effective date:** May 13, 2026

**History:** This policy updates HR-408 dated March 4, 2020, which replaced and updated BP #133.

**Approved by:** EWSHS Board of Trustees

---

## Purpose

To establish a policy pertaining to the retention and confidentiality of personnel records and files. To make sure employee records are protected, kept confidential, and maintained consistent with EWSHS' retention schedules for business and legal purposes.

---

## Definitions

**Employee personnel record** (record) means any writing regardless of physical form, including electronic formats, or characteristics that may be required for business and legal purposes:

- Containing information relating to an employee or their employment;
- When prepared, owned, used, or retained by EWSHS Human Resources;

**Employee personnel file** (file) means the official employee file containing all records of employment and other related information. This file includes but is not limited to employee appointment letters, performance evaluations, applications/resumes, training records, corrective or disciplinary actions, letters of commendation, work schedules, and other job-related information, including records cited by RCW 49.12.240.

**Medical/affirmative action file** means the official employee file containing records of medical information, including reasonable accommodation, affirmative action information, emergency contact

information, I-9 forms, labor and Industry documentation. Also included are documents showing an employee's race, color, age, sex, disability, religion, creed, marital status, national origin, sexual orientation, Vietnam Era Veteran status, disabled veteran status, use of guide dog or service animal, recently separated veteran status, or other protected veteran status. This file is kept separate from all other employee records and is kept secured and confidential in accordance with state and federal law.

**Payroll file** means the official employee file containing records related to an employee's pay, insurance, and retirement. Employee payroll files are kept separately from all other employee personnel records and are stored by the Department of Enterprise Services (DES). Additional time may be required to access.

**Supervisor file** means the un-official employee personnel file containing records gathered by an employee's supervisor in preparation for employee's performance evaluation. Includes, but is not limited to notes of performance, training and development, job assignments; and other related documentation.

**Writing** means the same as defined by RCW 42.56.010 (4) Definitions.

---

## Policy Statement

EWSHS will protect the confidentiality of employee records, limit access, and organize and retain employee records. Payroll records managed and maintained by the Department of Enterprise Services Finance Division are outside the scope of this policy.

Employees have access to view their own personnel files, during standard hours, in the presence of a human resource office representative. Upon the employee's request, the employee must be provided with a copy of any information in the employee's personnel file. An employee may authorize any other person to review their personnel file in the presence of a human resource office representative by providing written authorization which details the name of the person or persons authorized to review the file, the date of authorization, and the printed name and signature of the employee. Such authorization will be retained by the Agency and appended to the personnel file of the employee.

Human resource representatives frequently refer to employee personnel files and do not need written authorization.

Supervisors and managers have access to view their subordinate employee's personnel files during standard hours, in the presence of a human resource office representative, without prior authorization.

Some state agencies have access to view personnel files during standard hours, in the presence of a human resource office representative, without having to obtain prior authorization. The following agencies may send representatives to view personnel files for state business purposes:

- Washington State Personnel Resources Board.

- Washington State Auditor.
- Director of State Human Resources or their designee.

An employee must be provided a copy of all adverse material placed in the personnel file at the time the material is included in the file. After an employee becomes aware that adverse information has been placed in his/her personnel file, he/she has a right to add a statement of rebuttal or correction of such information. At any time, an employee has the right to add job performance information to his/her personnel file.

Supervisors and managers may add information to their subordinate employee’s personnel file with human resource representative consent, and with notification to the employee.

Material that is proven to be false or inaccurate will be promptly corrected by a human resource representative and will be destroyed unless: (a) The employee requests that the information be kept; or (b) The information is related to pending legal action or legal action(s) may reasonably be expected to result.

EWSHS retains employee personnel files at the agency as long as an individual is employed by the agency and as required by the State Government General Records Retention Schedule.

When an EWSHS employee accepts an appointment with a different state agency, EWSHS, as most recent former employer, will provide employee information to the new employer in a transmittal package using the authorized transmittal forms available on the DES website under Manager HR Forms- Employee Personnel Records Transmittal and Employee Payroll Records Transmittal.

---

## Primary Roles and Responsibilities

<b>Role</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
<b>Employee</b>	Know your rights regarding personnel files
<b>Supervisor</b>	Be aware of your responsibilities regarding personnel files.
<b>People &amp; Culture Manager</b>	Follow the policy and procedures outlined to handle personnel files including confidentiality and retention.
<b>DES Small Agency HR Services Primary Consultant</b>	Advise agencies if any questions arise regarding personnel files, confidentiality and retention.