

## **Transcript: Public Records Video**

Hello everyone, my name is Jesse, with the Information Governance Office, Department of Health.

I want to give you a high-level overview of public records.

We'll just need about five, 10 minutes to go through what public records are all about, and where what laws are in place for Washington State and how we need to handle our records here at the Department of Health.

I know with your work you'll be entering data into a computer system, you will be making phone calls, and a lot of us don't think about what type of records that we are creating as we are doing those duties.

So what does this mean for me, for public records?

We are responsible for the records that we create, use, and retain.

Public disclosure is a complicated, detailed process that there can be legal repercussions if rules aren't followed.

And of course, legal actions can be taken against the agency, division office, or even staff members.

So we must be very careful to be very thoughtful about how we are managing our records and how we are creating records while we are working at the Department of Health.

The Washington's Open Public Records Act was passed in 1972, and this just allows for more transparency into government work.

### **Time: 1:07**

We are what they call a Sunshine State or sunshine laws. In other words, light shined into government for transparency reasons, so that the public can see how we are handling our records or what we are creating, and they have the ability to request those records. And, that's why it is so important that we handle them in the correct way.

### **Time: 1:27**

What does the Public Records Act say? Mainly two things: One, records are open. Public records of government agencies are presumed open. In other words, that means that these records are available for public disclosure requests.

Narrow Withholding means record or information and records can be withheld only by law; exemptions must be narrowly construed, which means that we have to be very careful with how we exempt our records.

If somebody's requesting records, we must go through line by line and only with old records that have an exemption by law.

For the most part, we lean towards giving the record out versus keeping it – just to be transparent as an agency.

### **Time: 2:11**

What is a public record? A public record means any writing containing information relating to the conduct of government or proprietary function prepared, owned, used, or retained by any state or local agency regardless of physical form or characteristics.

So, that is a mouthful. Basically, a public record is any piece of business, regardless of the format, that we capture in some way. So, any piece of business that we capture is considered public record.

Public records are considered public property, and they belong to people of the State of Washington.

We, as employees or contractors, we are stewards of that record.

### **Time 2:53**

In our previous slide, we had the word “writing” – any writing containing information related to conduct.

The term “writing” is very, as you can see from this slide, it’s elaborated much more. Writing includes this whole list – I won’t go through all of it, but you know, handwriting, typewriting, printing, photographs, recording of information – whether it’s film, tape, or photographs.

This term “writing” is very board in terms of, you know, we can easily create many many records.

A lot of people don’t think about when they’re writing things down or leaving voicemails that they are not, you know, creating records that are available for public disclosure.

Again, as you are doing your work, just remember to realize that when I take notes, When I leave voicemails, when I talk to people when I write things down, that they are considered records.

The key to all of this is if you don’t need it, don’t write it down. Or, once you enter it into the system, then you can dispose of that record.

### **Time: 3:50**

Another form of public record can also include our media, our devices, text messages sent and received by public employees in a capacity for work purposes, whether it’s a personal device – it could be your home computer or your personal cell phone. If it’s used for agency business, it’s considered a public record.

So, again, be mindful of the devices we’re using. Be mindful of the record that we are creating. I the job you’re gonna be doing here at the Department of Health, you know, again, phone calls, entering data into the system, making notes on paper – just do your best to try not to keep records that aren’t needed or create records that aren’t needed.

We don’t really want to

be taking notes of the phone calls and writing down people’s confidential information on paper. Really, as we take the information, or as we talk to people on the phone, or whatever medium the information come in, just be sure to enter that right into the system.

Then, destroy all records or destroy the notes that were created or anything that we’ve done around that specific person.

Getting records in the system, being clean with it, as in keep everybody safe from having the need for these records to be exposed.

Again, I know this was a really fast kind of overview of public records, but ideally, just remember that on our day to day work, and things we create, they're not destroyed. We enter into the system of record, and they are available for the public to request.

Thank you for your time today.

Again, I know this was quick, but I just wanted to say thank you for all the work you're doing. Thank you for helping us during this time, and have a great day.