What You Need to Know about Public Records

A record is any information recorded in any way, regardless of physical form or characteristics, created or sent, organized or received by department staff in the course of public business. This term includes documents and electronically stored information (ESI).

Public Records are identified using the same three criteria in both 40.14 RCW "Preservation and Destruction of Public Records" and 42.56 RCW "Public Records Act"

1. Made by or received by any agency - this includes ANYONE who creates, receives, and uses public records while working on behalf of a government agency - Elected and appointed officials, public employees, contractors and volunteers

2. Is in connection with public business - or is a record that provides the proof of agency business. This includes not only the core mission of the agency, but those functions that supports the agency's continuing operations such as finance, human resources, facility and asset management.

3. Regardless of physical form - A record is a record, regardless of physical form. Emails are examples of public records.

Any record created for government business is a public record.

Specific examples include:

- Records created using a piece of paper and a pen
- Email
- Voicemail
- Text messages
- Database

When entering data directly into a system, there isn't a need to create or keep separate notes. The system will keep track of the official record.