**Policy Procedure**

The audience for the policy is agency staff, so it must meet their needs and the needs of the agency. Therefore, the records manager must look first to his or her program in deciding what information to include and how to structure it. However, there are four elements common to most policy manuals:

* Background information on records management
* General procedures
* Information about specific records
* Reference materials

A sample table of contents for a Records Management Manual incorporating these topics is included here.

**Sample Contents for a Program Specific  
Records Management Manual**

1. Introduction
   * Purpose of the Manual
   * Purpose of Records Management
   * Records Management Laws and Regulations
   * Agency Records Management Policy
   * Staff Responsibilities
2. Records Management Procedures in the Office
   * Records Creation
     + When do you create records?
     + What must you do with the records you create?
   * Records Maintenance and Use
     + Filing procedures
     + Records circulation and control
     + Information security
   * Records Disposition
     + Records cleanup
     + Disposing of records
     + Sending records to the State Records Center
   * Special Media
     + Electronic records
     + Audiovisual records
   * Maps and Drawings
3. File Plan and Records Identification
   * Overview of Major File Plan
   * Listing of Major Records Series
     + Description of records
     + Recordkeeping requirements
     + Custodians
     + File plans
     + Disposition
     + Identification of nonrecord collections
4. Appendices
   * File Plan
   * Sample Forms
   * Glossary

**Background Information**

The manual should include at least a short introduction that reviews for staff:

* The purpose of the manual
* Goals of the records management program
* An overview of the basic regulations and policies
* Staff responsibilities

This section is meant to be short. The goal is to provide staff with the information they need to do their jobs, not to replicate all State and Agency records management policies. It simply provides context for the main part of the manual which comes in the following two sections.

**Procedures**

The second major area to be addressed is procedures for managing the records. The formats for presenting this information are endless. We've chosen to model it on the lifecycle of records. Records creation covers the definition of a record, the importance of creating the "right" records; and alerts staff to what they must do when they create records (e.g., make a copy of all outgoing correspondence for the unit file). The section might also cover topics such as types of records (program, administrative, case files, etc.), personal papers and working files, recordkeeping requirements, and other "theoretical" issues you feel are important or meaningful to the staff.

The section on maintenance and use should discuss general filing procedures. Examples include:

* File cut-off procedures
* Who is responsible for adding document filing information
* Where records are to be put for filing

Circulation and control procedures are a must and should be included, as should any program specific procedures for handling sensitive information.

The third component of the procedures section concerns records disposition and should provide detailed guidance on how staff should go about disposing of records, including information on what they can destroy, how to send records to the State records center or Archives, cleanup days, and similar issues.

Finally, include information on managing electronic records and other special media such as audiovisual and cartographic items if the office creates such records. This may be woven into the regular discussion or handled separately.

**Records**

The third major section of the Manual should provide staff with all the information they need to manage the specific records created in their program. Following a general discussion of the program's file plan, we recommend a series by series discussion of the records found in the program.

If there is a separate entry for each series, with all of the information necessary to manage those records in one place, staff can easily find and use the information that pertains to the records they create without having to comb the entire manual.

For each series, provide a description of the records, the recordkeeping requirements, arrangement, the location of the records and the custodians, and filing and disposition information. Some programs include additional information such as sample file labels for each series. Most of this information should be available from your records inventory and the records schedules. Be sure to include information about nonrecords so staff are clear about what to do with such collections.

**Appendices**

Finally, provide copies of documents that the staff may need for reference. The ones most often included are the program file plan, copies of forms, laws and regulations, and a glossary of terms.