

**§ 251.202 Agency support to organizations representing Federal employees and other organizations.**

(a) An agency may provide support services to an organization when the agency determines that such action would benefit the agency's programs or would be warranted as a service to employees who are members of the organization and complies with applicable statutes and regulations. Examples of such support services are as follows:

(1) Permitting employees, in appropriate cases, to use agency equipment or administrative support services for preparing papers to be presented at conferences or symposia or published in journals;

(2) Using the authority under 5 U.S.C. 4109 and 4110, as implemented by 5 CFR part 410, to pay expenses of employees to attend professional organization meetings when such attendance is for the purpose of employee development or directly concerned with agency functions or activities and the agency can derive benefits from employee attendance at such meetings; and

(3) Following a liberal policy in authorizing excused absence for other employees who are willing to pay their own expenses to attend a meeting of a professional association or other organization from which an agency could derive some benefits.

(b) Agencies may provide Government resources support to organizations (such as space in Government facilities for meeting purposes and the use of agency bulletin boards, internal agency mail distribution systems, electronic bulletin boards and other means of informing agency employees about meetings and activities) in accordance with appropriate General Services Administration regulations contained in title 41 of the Code of Federal Regulations. The mere provision of such support to any organization is not to be construed as Federal sponsorship, sanction, or endorsement of the organization or its activities.

**Subpart C—Dues Withholding**

**§ 251.301 Associations of management officials and/or supervisors.**

Dues withholding for associations of management officials and/or supervisors is covered in 5 CFR 550.331.

**§ 251.302 All other organizations.**

Under 5 CFR 550.311(b), an agency may permit an employee to make an allotment for any legal purpose deemed appropriate by the head of the agency. Agencies may provide for the allotment of dues for organizations representing Federal employees under that section.

**PART 293—PERSONNEL RECORDS**

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AUTHORITY: 5 U.S.C. 552 and 4315; E.O. 12107 (December 28, 1978), 3 CFR 1954–1958 Comp.; 5 U.S.C. 1103, 1104, and 1302; 5 CFR 7.2; E.O. 9830; 3 CFR 1943–1948 Comp.; 5 U.S.C. 2951(2) and 3301; and E.O. 12107.

SOURCE: 44 FR 65033, Nov. 9, 1979, unless otherwise noted.

**Subpart A—Basic Policies on Maintenance of Personnel Records**

**§ 293.101 Purpose and scope.**

(a) This subpart sets forth basic policies governing the creation, development, maintenance, processing, use, dissemination, and safeguarding of personnel records which the Office of Personnel Management requires agencies to maintain in the personnel management or personnel policy setting process.

(b) Agencies in the Executive Branch of the Federal Government are subject to specific Office of Personnel Management recordkeeping requirements to varying degrees, pursuant to statute, Office regulation, or formal agreements between the Office and agencies. This subpart applies to any department

or independent establishment in the Executive Branch of the Federal Government, including a government corporation or Government controlled corporation, except those specifically excluded from Office recordkeeping requirements by statute, Office regulation, or formal agreement between the Office and that agency.

**§ 293.102 Definitions.**

In this part:

*Agency* means any executive department, military department, Government corporation, Government controlled corporation, or other establishment in the Executive Branch of the Government (including the Executive Office of the President), or any independent regulatory agency;

*Data subject* means the individual about whom the Office or agency is maintaining information in a system of records;

*Individual* means a citizen of the United States or an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence;

*Information* means papers, records, photographs, magnetic storage media, micro storage media, and other documentary materials regardless of physical form or characteristics, containing data about an individual and required by the Office in pursuance of law or in connection with the discharge of official business, as defined by statute, regulation, or administrative procedure;

*Maintain* includes collect, use, or disseminate;

*Office* means the Office of Personnel Management;

*Personnel record* means any record concerning an individual which is maintained and used in the personnel management or personnel policysetting process. (For purposes of this part, this term is not limited just to those personnel records in a system of records and subject to the Privacy Act);

*Record* means any item, collection, or grouping of information about an individual that is maintained by an agency, including, but not limited to, his or her education, financial transactions, medical history, criminal history, or employment history;

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*System of records* means a group of records under the control of any agency from which information is retrieved by the name of the individual or by some identifying number, symbol, or other identifying particular assigned to the individual.

### § 293.103 Recordkeeping standards.

(a) The head of each agency shall ensure that persons having access to or involved in the creation, development, processing, use, or maintenance of personnel records are informed of pertinent recordkeeping regulations and requirements of the Office of Personnel Management and the agency. Authority to maintain personnel records does not constitute authority to maintain information in the record merely because it may be useful; both Government-wide and internal agency personnel records shall contain only information concerning an individual that is relevant and necessary to accomplish the Federal personnel management purposes required by statute, Executive order, or Office regulation.

(b) The Office is responsible for establishing minimum standards of accuracy, relevancy, necessity, timeliness, and completeness for personnel records it requires agencies to maintain. These standards are discussed in appropriate chapters of the Guide to Personnel Recordkeeping. Before approval of any agency requests for changes in recordkeeping practices governed by the Guide to Personnel Recordkeeping, the Office will examine the proposal or request in the context of such standards set forth by the agency in support of the proposal and in light of the personnel program area that requires these records.

[44 FR 65033, Nov. 9, 1979, as amended at 66 FR 66709, Dec. 27, 2001]

### § 293.104 Collection of information.

(a) Any information in personnel records whether or not those records are in a system of records, used in whole or in part in making a determination about an individual's rights, benefits, or privileges under Federal personnel programs should, to the greatest extent practicable, be collected directly from the individual concerned. Factors to be considered in de-

termining whether to collect the data from the individual concerned or a third party are when:

(1) The nature of the information is such that it can only be obtained from another party;

(2) The cost of collecting the information directly from the individual is unreasonable when compared with the cost of collecting it from another party;

(3) There is virtually no risk that information collected from other parties, if inaccurate, could result in a determination adverse to the individual concerned;

(4) The information supplied by an individual must be verified by another party; or

(5) There are provisions made, to the greatest extent practicable, to verify information collected from another party with the individual concerned.

### § 293.105 Restrictions on collection and use of information.

(a) First Amendment. Personnel records describing how individuals exercise rights guaranteed by the First Amendment are prohibited unless expressly authorized by statute, or by the individual concerned, or unless pertinent to and within the scope of an authorized law enforcement activity. These rights include, but are not limited to, free exercise of religious and political beliefs, freedom of speech and the press, and freedom to assemble and to petition the government.

(b) Social Security Number.

(1) Agencies may not require individuals to disclose their Social Security Number unless disclosure would be required;

(i) Under Federal statute; or

(ii) Under any statute, Executive order, or regulation that authorizes any Federal, State, or local agency maintaining a system of records that was in existence and operating prior to January 1, 1975, to request the Social Security Number as a necessary means of verifying the identity of an individual.

(2) Individuals asked to voluntarily (circumstances not covered by paragraph (b)(1) of this section) provide

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their Social Security Number shall suffer no penalty or denial of benefits for refusing to provide it.

### § 293.106 Safeguarding information about individuals.

(a) To ensure the security and confidentiality of personnel records, in whatever form, each agency shall establish administrative, technical, and physical controls to protect information in personnel records from unauthorized access, use, modification, destruction, or disclosure. As a minimum, these controls shall require that all persons whose official duties require access to and use of personnel records be responsible and accountable for safeguarding those records and for ensuring that the records are secured whenever they are not in use or under the direct control of authorized persons. Generally, personnel records should be held, processed, or stored only where facilities and conditions are adequate to prevent unauthorized access.

(b) Personnel records must be stored in metal filing cabinets which are locked when the records are not in use, or in a secured room. Alternative storage facilities may be employed provided they furnish an equivalent or greater degree of security than these methods. Except for access by the data subject, only employees whose official duties require access shall be allowed to handle and use personnel records, in whatever form or media the records might appear. To the extent feasible, entry into personnel record storage areas shall be similarly limited. Documentation of the removal of records from storage areas must be kept so that adequate control procedures can be established to assure that removed records are returned on a timely basis.

(c) Disposal and destruction of personnel records shall be in accordance with the General Record Schedule issued by the General Services Administration for the records or, alternatively, with Office or agency records control schedules approved by the National Archives and Records Service of the General Services Administration.

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### § 293.107 Special safeguards for automated records.

(a) In addition to following the security requirements of § 293.106 of this part, managers of automated personnel records shall establish administrative, technical, physical, and security safeguards for data about individuals in automated records, including input and output documents, reports, punched cards, magnetic tapes, disks, and on-line computer storage. The safeguards must be in writing to comply with the standards on automated data processing physical security issued by the National Bureau of Standards, U.S. Department of Commerce, and, as a minimum, must be sufficient to:

(1) Prevent careless, accidental, or unintentional disclosure, modification, or destruction of identifiable personal data;

(2) Minimize the risk that skilled technicians or knowledgeable persons could improperly obtain access to, modify, or destroy identifiable personnel data;

(3) Prevent casual entry by unskilled persons who have no official reason for access to such data;

(4) Minimize the risk of an unauthorized disclosure where use is made of identifiable personal data in testing of computer programs;

(5) Control the flow of data into, through, and from agency computer operations;

(6) Adequately protect identifiable data from environmental hazards and unnecessary exposure; and

(7) Assure adequate internal audit procedures to comply with these procedures.

(b) The disposal of identifiable personal data in automated files is to be accomplished in such a manner as to make the data unobtainable to unauthorized personnel. Unneeded personal data stored on reusable media such as magnetic tapes and disks must be erased prior to release of the media for reuse.

### § 293.108 Rules of conduct.

(a) *Scope.* These rules of conduct apply to all Office and agency employees responsible for creation, development, maintenance, processing, use,

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dissemination, and safeguarding of personnel records. The Office and agencies shall require that such employees are familiar with these and appropriate supplemental agency internal regulations.

(b) *Standards of conduct.* Office and agency employees whose official duties involve personnel records shall be sensitive to individual rights to personal privacy and shall not disclose information from any personnel record unless disclosure is part of their official duties or required by executive order, regulation, or statute (e.g., required by the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552).

(c) *Improper uses of personnel information.* Any Office or agency employee who makes a disclosure of personnel records knowing that such disclosure is unauthorized, or otherwise knowingly violates these regulations, shall be subject to disciplinary action and may also be subject to criminal penalties where the records are subject to the Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. 552a). Employees are prohibited from using personnel information not available to the public, gained through official duties, for commercial solicitation or sale, or for personal gain.

### Subpart B—Personnel Records Subject to the Privacy Act

#### § 293.201 Purpose.

The purpose of this subpart is to set forth the criteria to be used to determine when personnel records on individuals are subject both to the regulations contained in this part and to Office or agency regulations implementing the Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. 552a. When personnel records are maintained within a system of records, the records are deemed to be within the scope of both the regulations in this part and Office or agency regulations implementing the Privacy Act.

#### § 293.202 Records subject to Office or agency Privacy Act regulations.

When the Office of Personnel Management publishes in the FEDERAL REGISTER a notice of system of records for personnel records which are maintained by the agencies or by the Office, that system of records will be subject

to the regulations in this part and also to the regulations in part 297 of this chapter. When agencies publish a notice of system of records for personnel records required by the Office that are not included in the Office's notices, those agency systems of records will be subject both to the regulations contained in this part and to agency promulgated regulations that implement the Privacy Act.

#### § 293.203 Review of Office or agency practices.

Reviews of agency personnel management policies and practices will be conducted to insure compliance with Office regulations. The Office may direct agencies to take whatever corrective action is necessary. Office or agency officials who have knowledge of violations of these regulations shall take whatever corrective action is necessary. Agencies shall list officials of the Office of Personnel Management as a routine user for personnel records to assist the Office in its oversight responsibilities.

### Subpart C—Official Personnel Folder

AUTHORITY: 5 U.S.C. 552; 5 U.S.C. 552a; 5 U.S.C. 1103; 5 U.S.C. 1104; 5 U.S.C. 1302, 5 U.S.C. 2951(2), 5 U.S.C. 3301; 5 U.S.C. 4315; E.O. 12107 (December 28, 1978), 3 CFR 1954–1958 Compilation; E.O. 9830 (February 24, 1947); 3 CFR 1943–1948 Compilation.

SOURCE: 50 FR 3309, Jan. 24, 1985, unless otherwise noted.

#### § 293.301 Applicability of regulations.

Except for those agencies specifically excluded from Office of Personnel Management (OPM) recordkeeping requirements by statute, OPM regulation, or formal agreement between OPM and the agency, this subpart applies to—and within this subpart agency means—each executive department and independent establishment of the Federal Government; each corporation wholly owned or controlled by the United States; and, with respect to positions subject to civil service rules and regulations, the legislative and judicial branches of the Federal Government. OPM will list agencies to which this subpart does not apply in the

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Guide to Personnel Recordkeeping, and will amend the Guide from time to time to update that list.

[76 FR 52537, Aug. 23, 2011]

### § 293.302 Establishment of Official Personnel Folder.

Each agency shall establish an Official Personnel Folder (OPF) for each employee occupying a position subject to this part, except as provided in § 293.306. Except as provided in the Guide to Personnel Recordkeeping, there will be only one OPF maintained for each employee regardless of service in various agencies.

[50 FR 3309, Jan. 24, 1985, as amended at 66 FR 66709, Dec. 27, 2001]

### § 293.303 The roles and responsibilities of the Office, agencies, and custodians.

(a) The Official Personnel Folder (OPF) of each employee in a position subject to civil service rules and regulations and of each former employee who held such a position is part of the records of the Office of Personnel Management (Office).

(b) The Office has Government-wide responsibility for developing regulations, practices and procedures for the establishment, maintenance, and transfer of OPFs.

(c) Agencies shall be responsible for the following:

(1) The establishment of the OPF for a new appointee or a new employee for whom no OPF has previously been established; and

(2) The maintenance of a previously existing OPF during the period any new appointee or employee remains an agency's employee.

(d)(1) Custodian means the agency in physical possession of an OPF. In the case of an electronic OPF (eOPF), the custodian is the agency that has primary access to an eOPF contained within a document management system approved by the Office.

(2) A custodian shall be responsible for the maintenance and transfer of the OPF or eOPF, and the costs associated with these activities.

(3) An agency is the custodian of an OPF it requests from the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC), for any temporary use, from the date that the

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OPF is transmitted by the NPRC to the agency until the date that the NPRC receives the OPF back from the agency.

(4) An agency is no longer the custodian of an OPF once the OPF has been transferred to and accepted by the NPRC.

(5) Once NPRC has approved the transfer, the Office is the custodian of the OPF until the destruction date established for the file pursuant to the National Archive and Records Administration's General Records Schedule, unless another agency requests the OPF from the NPRC in the interim.

(e) Agencies and custodians shall carry out their responsibilities with respect to the OPF or eOPF in accordance with this subpart and the Office's Guide to Personnel Recordkeeping.

[76 FR 52537, Aug. 23, 2011]

### § 293.304 Maintenance and content of folder.

The head of each agency shall maintain in the Official Personnel Folder the reports of selection and other personnel actions named in section 2951 of title 5, United States Code. The folder shall contain long-term records affecting the employee's status and service as required by OPM's instructions and as designated in the Guide to Personnel Recordkeeping.

[58 FR 65533, Dec. 15, 1993]

### § 293.305 Type of folder to be used.

Each agency shall use only OPFs from Office of Federal Supply and Services stock (Standard Form 66) for the folders required by this part.

### § 293.306 Use of existing folders upon transfer or reemployment.

When an agency hires a person who has served on or after April 1, 1947, in a position subject to this part, it shall request the transfer of the OPF pertaining to the person's employment. The folder so obtained shall be used in lieu of establishing a new OPF. In the event that the prior service occurred wholly before April 1, 1947, the agency shall request any files or records that may be located in the Federal records storage center. The request shall note that because of the dates of service

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there will likely be no OPF. Any such file or record found for this individual shall be incorporated into the OPF being established for the employee.

(a) When a person for whom an OPF has been established transfers from one agency to another, the last employing (losing) agency shall, on request, transfer the OPF to the new employing agency.

(b) Before transferring the Official Personnel Folder, the losing agency shall:

(1) Remove those records of a temporary nature filed on the left side of the folder, except for PMRS employees' performance ratings of record including the performance plan on which the most recent rating was based;

(2) Transfer performance ratings of record and the performance plan on which the most recent rating was based from the Employee Performance File of PMRS employees to their Official Personnel Folder, if the ratings and plans are not maintained by the agency in the Official Personnel Folder; and

(3) Ensure that all permanent documents of the folder are complete, correct, and present in the folder in accordance with the Guide to Personnel Recordkeeping.

[50 FR 3309, Jan. 24, 1985, as amended at 50 FR 35494, Aug. 30, 1985; 66 FR 66709, Dec. 27, 2001]

### § 293.307 Disposition of folders of former Federal employees.

(a) Folders of persons separated from Federal employment must be retained by the losing agency for 30 working days after separation, and may be retained for additional 60 days (90 days where administratively necessary, e.g., where an appeal or an allegation of discrimination is made or where an employee retires or dies in service). Thereafter, the OPF must be transferred to the General Services Administration, National Personnel Records Center (Civilian Personnel Records), 111 Winnebago Street, St. Louis, Missouri 63118.

(b) When a former Federal employee is reappointed in the Federal service, the National Personnel Records Center (Civilian Personnel Records) shall, upon request, transfer the OPF to the new employing agency.

(c) Agencies are responsible for all costs associated with the establishment and maintenance of OPFs and the transfer of OPFs to the National Personnel Records Center.

(d) Agencies are responsible for all costs associated with agency-initiated requests for OPFs or services from the National Personnel Records Center.

[50 FR 3309, Jan. 24, 1985; 50 FR 8993, Mar. 6, 1985, as amended at 76 FR 52537, Aug. 23, 2011]

### § 293.308 Removal of temporary records from OPFs.

The employing agency having possession of an OPF shall remove temporary records from the OPF before it is transferred to another agency. For these and also for temporary records of their current employees, maintenance of the records shall be in accordance with General Records Schedule 1, promulgated by the General Services Administration.

### § 293.309 Reconstruction of lost OPFs.

Agencies will take necessary precautions to safeguard all OPFs. In the event of a lost or destroyed OPF, the current (or last, in the case of a former Federal employee) employing agency shall take the necessary action to reconstruct the essential portions of the OPF as specified in the Guide to Personnel Recordkeeping or other Office instructions.

[50 FR 3309, Jan. 24, 1985, as amended at 66 FR 66709, Dec. 27, 2001]

### § 293.310 Response to requests for information.

The Office, or an agency in physical possession of an OPF in response to a third party Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request may disclose information as provided in this subpart. A current employee's request for access to his/her own OPF (also included are employee performance file system folders and files) that cites the FOIA, as with all stated Privacy Act requests made by current employees, shall be processed in accordance with agency Privacy Act procedures consistent with Office regulations in part 297 of this chapter. All requests for their OPFs from former employees, and FOIA requests for former employee OPFs, shall

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be referred to the Office's regional or area office nearest to the location of the requester.

### § 293.311 Availability of information.

(a) The following information from both the OPF and employee performance file system folders, their automated equivalent records, and from other personnel record files that constitute an agency record within the meaning of the FOIA and which are under the control of the Office, about most present and former Federal employees, is available to the public:

- (1) Name;
- (2) Present and past position titles and occupational series;
- (3) Present and past grades;
- (4) Present and past annual salary rates (including performance awards or bonuses, incentive awards, merit pay amount, Meritorious or Distinguished Executive Ranks, and allowances and differentials);
- (5) Present and past duty stations (includes room numbers, shop designations, or other identifying information regarding buildings or places of employment); and
- (6) Position descriptions, identification of job elements, and those performance standards (but not actual performance appraisals) that the release of which would not interfere with law enforcement programs or severely inhibit agency effectiveness. Performance elements and standards (or work expectations) may be withheld when they are so intertwined with performance appraisals that their disclosure would reveal an individual's performance appraisal.

(b) The Office or agency will generally not disclose information where the data sought is a list of names, present or past position titles, grades, salaries, performance standards, and/or duty stations of Federal employees which, as determined by the official responsible for custody of the information:

- (1) Is selected in such a way that would reveal more about the employee on whom information is sought than the six enumerated items, the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy; or

(2) Would otherwise be protected from mandatory disclosure under an exemption of the FOIA.

(c) In addition to the information described in paragraph (a) of this section, a Government official may provide other information from these records (or automated equivalents) of an employee, to others outside of the agency, under a summons, warrant, subpoena, or other legal process; as provided by the Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. 552a(b)(4) through (b)(11)), under those Privacy Act routine uses promulgated by the Office, and as required by the FOIA.

### Subpart D—Employee Performance File System Records

**AUTHORITY:** 5 U.S.C. 552a and 5 U.S.C. 4305 and 4315; E.O. 12107 (December 28, 1978); 5 U.S.C. 1103, 1104, and 1302; 3 CFR 1954–1958 Compilation; 5 CFR 7.2; E.O. 9830, 3 CFR 1943–1948 Compilation.

**SOURCE:** 47 FR 3080, Jan. 22, 1982, unless otherwise noted.

### § 293.401 Applicability of regulations.

This subpart applies to Executive agencies as defined in sections 105, 3132(a)(1) and 4301(1) of title 5, U.S. Code, including Military Departments (but not non-appropriated fund employees) as defined in section 102 of title 5, U.S. Code, and independent establishments as defined in section 104 of title 5, U.S. Code. Within those agencies, the requirements of this subpart apply to all employees occupying positions subject to civil service rules and regulations, including Senior Executive Service positions as defined in 5 U.S.C. 3132(a)(2).

### § 293.402 Establishment of separate employee performance record system.

(a) Copies of employees' performance ratings of record, including the performance plans on which the ratings are based, must be placed in either the employee's Official Personnel Folder (OPF) or in the Employee Performance File (EPF). However, other performance-related documents may be retained in the OPF only when the agency prescribes the use of a separate envelope, temporarily located in the OPF, and removed whenever the OPF

(except as required in §293.404(b)) is transferred to another agency. Performance ratings of record, including the performance plans on which the ratings are based, shall be retained on the left (temporary) side of the OPF. No other performance-related record shall be retained on the left (temporary) or right (long term) side of the OPF or shall be transferred to the National Personnel Records Center (except as required by §293.404(b)).

(b) Except for performance records maintained in the OPF consistent with paragraph (a) of this section, each agency having employees occupying a position described in §293.401 shall provide for maintenance of performance-related records for such employees in this EPF system. The agency may elect to retain records in a separate file that is located in the same office with the OPF, or in an envelope kept in the OPF itself. If the agency determines that a separate EPF is cost-effective, such a file may be located in another designated agency office (as specified in the agency's performance appraisal plan) including with supervisors or managers (hereinafter referred to as rating officials) or with Performance Review Boards. Any supporting documents that the agency may prescribe as necessary for agency officials in performance of their duties shall be kept in these files.

(c)(1) Agencies shall provide their employees access to their performance files (automated and manual). Such a request for access shall be processed in accordance with established agency procedures, consistent with Office of Personnel Management regulations regarding access to records contained in part 297 of this chapter. Such access shall be provided to the employee or to the employee's designated representative, and such records may also be disclosed to other officials of the agency who have a need for the documents in the performance of their duties.

(2) All other requests for performance documents made to agency officials (e.g., Freedom of Information Act requests or requests made under the "routine use" provisions of the Privacy Act) shall be processed by the responsible agency official in accordance with agency procedures consistent with Of-

fice of Personnel Management regulations regarding disclosures of such records contained in parts 293 and 297 of this chapter.

(3) Privacy Act requests for amendment of records maintained in this system shall be processed by the responsible agency official in accordance with agency procedures consistent with Office of Personnel Management regulations regarding amendment of records contained in part 297 of this chapter.

(d) Agencies maintaining the EPF in an automated or microform system shall issue instructions that contain necessary procedures to ensure that the same requirements as in paragraph (c) of this section, relating to all manual records, are met.

[47 FR 3080, Jan. 22, 1982, as amended at 51 FR 8410, Mar. 11, 1986]

#### **§293.403 Contents of employee performance files.**

(a) A decision on what constitutes a performance-related document within the meaning of this subpart rests with the agency. Agency implementing instructions, for both incumbents of the Senior Executive Service and other positions, shall provide specific written guidance of the description of what constitutes the agency's official performance-related forms and documents.

(b) Agency implementing instructions describing such records shall indicate where and for how long they are retained and how and when they are to be destroyed. Such instructions shall also describe what records are considered to be performance-related (as specifically as is feasible) and shall include all performance-related records maintained as a system of records within the meaning of the Privacy Act. Such records would generally include:

(1) Any form or other document which records the performance appraisal, including appraisals leading to merit pay determinations.

(2) Any form or other document used by rating officials to recommend a personnel action affecting an employee (including a request for personnel action document, but only when the action is not effected) when the basis for the action (e.g., removal, reassignment, demotion, promotion, or merit

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pay or other performance award) is performance-related.

(3) Recommendations for training that are performance-related.

(4) Any form or other document furnished in support of recommended actions such as those listed in paragraph (b)(2) of this section and the agency's final decision on the matter (e.g., a recommendation for merit pay or an agency decision to grant only one-half the comparability pay adjustment).

(5) Any form or other document which the rating official is required by the agency to keep during an appraisal period (e.g., quality control records, production records, or similar records used to track employee performance during the appraisal period.)

(6) Any form or other document regarding Performance Review Board decisions, including supporting documentation and any transcript of hearings or testimony from witnesses.

(7) Any form or other document regarding decisions or recommendations of agency Executive Resources Boards related to performance appraisal or actions resulting from performance appraisals.

(8) Appraisals of potential (e.g., in connection with an agency's merit promotion procedures) if agency implementing instructions specifically require or permit retention of a copy.

(9) Individual development plans.

(10) Copies of licenses, certificates of proficiency, or similar documents required of the position.

(c) General information about the employee, *i.e.*, identification data, information concerning Federal and non-Federal employment experience, and information about any training programs the employee participated in may, if an agency deems it appropriate, be retained in this system.

[47 FR 3080, Jan. 22, 1982, as amended at 63 FR 43867, Aug. 17, 1998]

**§ 293.404 Retention schedule.**

(a)(1) Except as provided in § 293.405(a), performance ratings or documents supporting them are generally not permanent records and shall, except for appointees to the SES and including incumbents of executive positions not covered by SES, be retained as prescribed below:

(i) Performance ratings of record, including the performance plans on which they are based, shall be retained for 4 years;

(ii) Supporting documents shall be retained for as long as the agency deems appropriate (up to 4 years);

(iii) Performance records superseded (e.g., through an administrative or judicial procedure) and performance-related records pertaining to a former employee (except as prescribed in § 293.405(a)) need not be retained for a minimum of 4 years. Rather, in the former case they are to be destroyed and in the latter case agencies shall determine the retention schedule; and

(iv) Except where prohibited by law, retention of automated records longer than the maximum prescribed here is permitted for purposes of statistical analysis so long as the data are not used in any action affecting the employee when the manual record has been or should have been destroyed.

(2) When an employee is reassigned within the employing agency, disposition of records in this system, including transfer with the employee who changes positions, shall be as agencies prescribe and consistent with § 293.405(a).

(3) Appraisals of unacceptable performance, where a notice of proposed demotion or removal is issued but not effected, and all documents related thereto, manual and automated, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 4303(d) must be destroyed after the employee completes one year of acceptable performance from the date of the written advance notice of the proposed removal or reduction in grade notice. Under conditions specified by an agency, and earlier destruction date is permitted and destruction must be no later than 30 days after the year is up.

(b) Performance records for Senior Executive Service appointees, including those serving under a Presidential appointment under 5 U.S.C. 3392(c), are to be retained as follows:

(1) Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 4314(b) (3) and (4), Senior Executive Service appointees shall have their performance-related records maintained for five consecutive years (from the date the appraisal is issued) beginning with the

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effective date of appointment, including individuals receiving appointments pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 3593(b).

(2) When an appointee of the Senior Executive Service moves to another position in the Service, either with the same or a different agency, all appropriate performance-related documents five years old or less shall be forwarded in the Employee Performance File along with the individual's OPF.

(3) When an employee in the Senior Executive Service accepts a Presidential appointment pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 3392(c), the employee's performance file shall be retained as long as the employee remains employed under that Presidential appointment. When the appointment ends, and the individual does not return to the Senior Executive Service, the employee's performance file shall be destroyed in accordance with agency procedures.

(c) Where any performance-related document is needed in connection with an ongoing administrative, negotiated, quasi-judicial, or judicial proceeding, and it continues to be retained in this system rather than another system, it may be retained for as long as necessary beyond the retention schedules identified in paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section.

(d) Screening and purging of folders/envelopes and rating official's work files for the purpose of compliance with these retention schedules shall be through any agency process insuring consistency with the requirements.

[47 FR 3080, Jan. 22, 1982, as amended at 51 FR 8411, Mar. 11, 1986; 56 FR 65416, Dec. 17, 1991]

### § 293.405 Disposition of records.

(a) When the OPF of a non-SES employee is sent to another servicing office in the employing agency, to another agency, or to the National Personnel Records Center, the "losing" servicing office shall include in the OPF all performance ratings of record that are 4 years old or less, including the performance plan on which the most recent rating was based, and the summary rating prepared when the employee changes positions, as prescribed in part 430 of this chapter. Also, the "losing" office will purge from the OPF all performance ratings and perform-

ance plans that are more than 4 years old, and other performance-related records, according to agency policy established under § 293.404(a)(2) and in accordance with the Guide to Personnel Recordkeeping.

(b) Consistent with transfer instructions pertaining to SES positions contained in this part, employee performance files shall be forwarded to gaining agencies at the same time as the OPF (5 CFR 293.207).

(c) Consistent with retention schedules promulgated in § 293.404, destruction of performance-related records shall be in accordance with agency procedures (e.g., by shredding or burning).

(d) If a former employee returns to an agency, a new employee performance file will be created unless the prior file for this employee is still available. The original file may be reactivated provided that, consistent with the retention schedules and destruction requirements promulgated in this subpart, the contents are properly disposed of.

(e)(1) It is the responsibility of the agency Personnel Director to insure the maintenance of employee performance files in accordance with this subpart and subparts A and B of this part, part 297 of this title, and with Office of Personnel Management guidance.

(2) This responsibility may be delegated in writing to other agency officials as appropriate. Implementing guidelines for agency performance appraisal systems shall provide written instructions for compliance with Office rules and procedures as well as descriptions of the documents and where they are retained, and shall ensure that records are retained in accordance with the provisions of § 293.402.

[47 FR 3080, Jan. 22, 1982, as amended at 51 FR 8411, Mar. 11, 1986; 56 FR 65416, Dec. 17, 1991; 66 FR 66709, Dec. 27, 2001]

### § 293.406 Disclosure of records.

Disclosure as used here means the furnishing of the record to someone other than the individual to whom the record pertains, his/her designated representative, or to an agency official who needs the information in the performance of official duties. Disclosure of information from this file system shall be made only as permitted by the

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Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. 552a(b)) and, with regard to the routine use provisions of that section, only under a routine use published by the Office for the system of records covering these records. However, to the extent that this system contains the data identified as being available to the public in § 293.311, for most Federal employees and under the same restrictions listed in that section, that information shall also be made available to the public from this system.

### Subpart E—Employee Medical File System Records

SOURCE: 51 FR 33235, Sept. 19, 1986, unless otherwise noted.

#### § 293.501 Applicability of regulations.

The applicability of this subpart is identical to that described in § 293.301.

#### § 293.502 Definitions.

For the purpose of this Subpart—

*Employee* is defined at 5 U.S.C. 2105 and excludes student volunteers and contractor employees.

*Employee Assistance and Counseling Record* means the record created when an employee participates in an agency assistance/counseling program (e.g., drug or alcohol abuse or personal counseling programs under Pub. L. 91-616, 92-255, and 79-658, respectively).

*Employee Exposure Record* (which is to be interpreted consistent with the term as it is defined at 29 CFR 1910.20(c)(8)) means a record containing any of the following kinds of information concerning employee exposure to toxic substances or harmful physical agents (as defined at 29 CFR 1910.20(c)(11)):

(a) Environmental (workplace) monitoring or measuring, including personal, area, grab, wipe, or other form of sampling, as well as related collection and analytical methodologies, calculations, and other background data relevant to interpretation of the results obtained;

(b) Biological monitoring results which directly assess the absorption of a substance or agent by body systems (e.g., the level of a chemical in the blood, urine, breath, hair, fingernails, etc.) but not including results which

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assess the biological effect of a substance or agent;

(c) Material safety data sheets; or

(d) Any other record, in the absence of the above, which reveals the identity (e.g., chemical, common, or trade name) of a toxic substance of harmful physical agent.

*Employee Medical File System (EMFS)* means the agency's complete system (automated, microformed, and paper records) for employee occupational medical records.

*Employee Medical Folder (EMF)* means a separate file folder (normally SF 66-D) established to contain all of the occupational medical records (both long-term and short-term records) designated for retention, which will be maintained by the employing agency during the employee's Federal service.

*Epidemiological Record* means a record maintained by an agency or subelement thereof as a result of an official medical research study conducted under the authority of the agency.

*Implementing instructions* means any form of internal agency issuance that provides the guidance required in § 293.503 and any other guidance the agency deems appropriate.

*Occupational Medical Record* means an occupation-related, chronological, cumulative record, regardless of the form or process by which it is maintained (e.g., paper document, microfiche, microfilm, or automatic data processing media), of information about health status developed on an employee, including personal and occupational health histories and the opinions and written evaluations generated in the course of diagnosis and/or employment-related treatment/examination by medical health care professionals and technicians. This definition includes the definition of medical records at 29 CFR 1910.20(c)(6); when the term "Occupational Medical Record" is used in these regulations, it includes "Employee Exposure Records" (as that term is defined in this section) and occupational illness, accident, and injury records.

*Non-occupational/Patient Record* means a record of treatment or examination, created and maintained by a health care facility, when the person is

admitted to or voluntarily seeks treatment at the health care facility for non-job-related reasons. Records maintained by an agency dispensary are patient records for the purposes of these regulations except when such records result as a condition of employment or relate to an on-the-job occurrence. In these cases, the records are "Occupational Medical Records" as defined herein.

*Non-personal Record* means any agency aggregate or statistical record or report resulting from studies covering employees or resulting from studies or the work-site environment.

**§ 293.503 Implementing instructions.**

Agencies must issue written internal instructions describing how their EMFS is to be implemented. These instructions must—

(a) Describe overall operation of the system within the agency including the designation of the agency official who will be responsible for overall system management. When the agency has a medical officer, that individual must be named the system manager. The system manager may then designate others within the agency to handle the day-to-day management of the records, e.g., the custodian of the records at the site where they are maintained;

(b) Be prepared with joint participation by agency medical, health, and safety, and personnel officers;

(c) Describe where and under whose custody employee occupational medical records will be physically maintained;

(d) Designate which agency office(s) will be responsible for deciding when and what occupational medical records are to be disclosed either to other agency officials or outside the agency;

(e) Ensure proper records retention and security, and preserve confidentiality of doctor/patient relationships;

(f) Provide that when the agency is requesting an EMF from the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC), the request form will show the name, title, and address of that agency's system manager or designee, who is the only official authorized to receive the EMF;

(g) Be consistent with Office regulations relating to personnel actions

when medical evidence is a factor (5 CFR parts 339, 432, 630, 752, and 831);

(h) Provide guidance on how an accounting of any record disclosure, as required by the Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. 552a(c)), will be done in a way that ensures that the accounting will be available for the life of the EMF;

(i) When long-term occupational medical records exist, provide for the creation of an EMF for an employee transferring to another agency or leaving Government service, and whether an EMF is to be established at the time an employee is being reassigned within the agency;

(j) Ensure a right of access (consistent with any special Privacy Act handling procedures invoked) to the records, in whatever format they are maintained, by the employee or a designated representative;

(k) Ensure that a knowledgeable official determines that all appropriate long-term occupational medical records are in an EMF prior to its transfer to another agency, to the NPRC, or to another office within the same employing agency;

(l) Ensure that all long-term occupational medical records an agency receives in an EMF are maintained, whether in that same EMF or by some other agency procedure, and forwarded to a subsequent employing agency or to NPRC;

(m) Ensure that, if occupational medical records are to be physically located in the same office as the Official Personnel Folder (OPF), the records are maintained physically apart from each other;

(n) Sets forth a policy that distinguishes, particularly for purposes of records disclosure, records in the nature of physician treatment records (which are generally not appropriate for disclosure to non-medical officials) from other medical reports properly available to officials making management decisions concerning the employee;

(o) Provide guidance that distinguishes records properly subject to this part from those (e.g., Postal Service or Foreign Service employee medical records) subject to different rules, particularly in Privacy Act and Freedom of Information Act matters;

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(p) Ensure that guidance regarding the processing of Privacy Act matters is consistent with Office regulations implementing the Privacy Act at 5 CFR parts 293 and 297; and

(q) Ensure that no security classification is assigned to an EMF by including therein any occupational medical record that has such a classification. In this regard, the agency creating the classified medical record is required to retain it separately from the EMF while placing a notice in the EMF of its existence and describing where requests for this record are to be submitted.

### **§ 293.504 Composition of, and access to, the Employee Medical File System.**

(a) All employee occupational medical records (which exclude employee assistance/counseling, patient, non-personal, and epidemiological records) whether they are maintained in an automated, microform, or paper mode, and wherever located in the agency, are part of the EMFS. The records maintained in the EMFS are part of a Governmentwide Privacy Act system of records established by the Office. Agencies have the responsibility to ensure that such documents are maintained in accordance with the Office's Privacy Act regulations in part 297 of this chapter, with the agency's instructions implementing those regulations, and with the retention schedule for employee medical records stipulated in § 293.511. While non-occupational/patient records pertaining to an employee are not required to be included as a record within the EMFS, under certain conditions to be discussed in subsequent OPM guidance, copies of such records are occupationally-related and, in those cases, may be included in the system.

(b) Agencies must provide employees access to their own EMFS records consistent with Office regulations contained in § 297.204(c) of this chapter. When unexcepted access can be provided directly to the employee, such unexcepted access must also be provided to any representative specifically designated in writing by the employee to receive the record. Disclosure of an employee's occupational medical

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records to agency officials (both medical and non-medical) will be granted only when the specific information sought is needed for the performance of official duties.

(c) Other agencies for employee occupational medical records made to the custodian of the records must be processed in accordance with the disclosure provisions of the Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. 552a(b)) and the Office's regulations at part 297 of this chapter.

(d) Processing of a Privacy Act request for amendment of any EMFS record must be consistent with the Office's regulations contained in part 297 of this chapter regarding amendment of records.

[51 FR 33235, Sept. 19, 1986, as amended at 66 FR 66709, Dec. 27, 2001]

### **§ 293.505 Establishment and protection of Employee Medical Folder.**

(a) As required by these rules, agencies must establish an EMF when the employee leaves the employing agency and occupational medical records for that employee exist; agencies may also establish an EMF (if none presently exists) for active employees if the agency chooses. An agency must request the transfer of an existing EMF (and maintain that EMF as received) at the same time it requests the transfer of an employee's OPF using the procedures contained in § 293.306.

(b) Neither the original occupational medical record nor duplicates are to be retained in the OPF. Prior to the establishment of an EMF for a separating employee, when such records are created, they must be maintained physically apart from the OPF, although they may be kept in the same office.

(c) Records in an EMF, whether or not located in an office other than where the OPF is maintained, must be properly safeguarded using procedures ensuring equal or greater levels of protection as those in § 293.106. Disclosures must be made only to those authorized to receive them, as described in § 293.504(b), and employees must be able to ascertain from agency implementing instructions the location of all of their medical records. An EMF must be under the control of a specifically designated medical, health, safety, or personnel officer as prescribed in the

agency's implementing internal procedures.

**§ 293.506 Ownership of the Employee Medical Folder.**

The EMF of each employee in a position subject to civil service rules and regulations is part of the records of the Office. When the EMF also contains occupational medical records created during employment in a position not subject to the civil service (e.g., with the Postal Service), the EMF is then part of the records of both the Office and the employing agency.

**§ 293.507 Maintenance and content of the Employee Medical Folder.**

The agency head must maintain all appropriate employee occupational medical records in the EMFS. When an EMF is established for an employee, as required in § 293.504, the agency's EMFS must be searched to obtain all records designated for retention in the EMF.

**§ 293.508 Type of folder to be used.**

Each agency must use a folder that (a) has been specifically identified as the EMF and issued through Federal Supply Service contracts (Standard Form 66 D); (b) has been authorized as an exception to this form by the Office for use by a specific agency; or (c) in the case of an EMF containing records under joint control of the Office and another agency, an exception to the use of this form that has been jointly authorized.

**§ 293.509 Use of existing Employee Medical Folders upon transfer or reemployment.**

The requirements of § 293.306, regarding the use of existing OPFs, apply to the use of existing EMFs upon the employee's transfer to or reemployment in a new employing agency.

**§ 293.510 Disposition of Employee Medical Folders.**

(a) When an employee transfers to another Federal agency, the EMF must be transferred to the gaining agency at the same time as the employee's OPF. The EMF is to be addressed only to the gaining agency's designated manager (medical, health, safety, or personnel officer, or other designee) of the EMFS.

(b) When an employee is separated from the Federal service, the EMF must be forwarded to the NPRC with the OPF, using the instructions in § 293.307 of this part.

(c) When a former Federal employee is re-employed by an agency, and that agency believes that an EMF exists, either at the last employing agency or at the NPRC, the agency will request the EMF, but no sooner than 30 days after the date of the new appointment. No EMFs will be routinely retrieved during the initial review process (as is done with the OPF) except when authority exists for the agency to require a medical evaluation prior to reaching a decision on employability. EMFs are to be transferred by the NPRC only to the agency-designated manager (medical, health, safety, or personnel, or other designee) shown on the request form.

**§ 293.511 Retention schedule.**

(a) Temporary EMFS records must not be placed in a newly-created EMF for a separating employee and must be removed from an already existing EMF before its transfer to another agency or to the NPRC. Such records must be disposed of in accordance with General Records Schedule (GRS) 1, item 21, issued by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

(b) Occupational Medical Records considered to be long-term records must be maintained for the duration of employment, plus 30 years or for as long as the OPF is maintained, whichever is longer. Therefore, upon separation, the records must be provided to the employee's new agency, or they must be transferred to the NPRC, which will dispose of them in accordance with GRS 1, item 21, issued by NARA.

**PART 294—AVAILABILITY OF OFFICIAL INFORMATION**

**Subpart A—Procedures for Disclosure of Records Under the Freedom of Information Act**

Sec.

294.101 Purpose.

294.102 General definitions.