



## Transferring Departmental Records to the Baltimore City Archives and Records Management Center (BCA-RMC)

Thank you for supporting the transfer of records to the Baltimore City Archives and Records Management Center (BCA-RMC). This guide details the necessary procedures and requirements to ensure a smooth and well-organized transfer of materials.

### The 5 Stages of a Records Transfer.

#### Stage 1. Retention Schedule.

Determine the retention schedule number that applies to the records OR work with the City Records Management Officer (CRMO) to write a new schedule (RDA / Records Disposition Authorization).

#### Stage 2. Transfer Preparation.

Box up pre-sorted paper records in [approved records storage boxes](#) and label with the prescribed information (see below). *For digital file transfers, work with the CRMO to determine file preparation appropriate to your circumstances.*

#### Stage 3. RTR Form.

Complete a [Records Transfer Request form](#) (RTR) and submit to the CRMO for review and approval. If you intend to transfer multiple types of records, each type must have its own approved retention schedule and a separate RTR. The CRMO may also request a detailed inventory of the records for cataloging purposes.

#### Stage 4. Schedule Transfer.

Once the RTR is approved, coordinate a transfer date and method with the CRMO. Deliver and assist with shelving the records on your transfer date OR supervise the relocation crew during records pick-up.

#### Stage 5. Finalize Transfer.

Receive follow-up contact from the CRMO to confirm receipt of your records or correct irregularities.

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### Stage 1. Retention Schedule.

Prior to a transfer, each distinct set or type of records must have an up-to-date Records Disposition Authorization (RDA), also known as a retention schedule. The RDA contains a detailed description of the record's format and function. It also notes the amount of time the record is kept, both in the department and in the BCA-RMC. A schedule number is assigned to each RDA by the City Records Management Officer (CRMO).

The schedule number is used to track and identify records within the BCA-RMC's inventory. This number is required to be labeled on all boxes brought to the BCA-RMC.

If you do not have an up-to-date RDA for the records you would like to transfer, or are unsure if one already exists, please reach out to the Records Management team at [rm.dlr@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:rm.dlr@baltimorecity.gov) or 410-396-3884.

If you have identified an approved existing schedule applicable to your records, review the specified "in Department" and "in Records Center" retention periods. Some non-permanent records can spend their entire retention period in your offices and do not need to be sent to the BCA-RMC for additional storage. However, before your office **securely** disposes of any records that have met their prescribed retention period, contact [rm.dlr@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:rm.dlr@baltimorecity.gov) or call 410-396-3884 to verify and receive approval. A destruction certificate documenting proper disposal will be registered with the Maryland State Archives as per [§ 10-616 of the Annotated Code of Maryland State Government](#).

A records transfer is most appropriate when the materials in question are no longer active or regularly used by your office. BCA-RMC staff can facilitate occasional access to records needed by your office, but records that still require daily or weekly use should be kept in the department. If this active period of use does not align with the retention periods on the RDA, please reach out to records management staff about a schedule revision.

If you believe your transfer includes historical materials in fragile condition that may require more specialized handling, please discuss a site visit and assessment with our office.

## **Stage 2. Transfer Preparation.**

Once you have identified or created the applicable RDA and determined that a set of records may appropriately be sent to the BCA-RMC, the next step is to begin preparing the records for transfer. To ensure that shelf space is maximized, that all boxes fit properly, and that labeling is consistent, all city agencies are required to use specific, approved records boxes. Departments can order boxes directly from [Maryland Correctional Enterprises](#). For assistance with obtaining boxes, contact the Records Management team at [rm.dlr@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:rm.dlr@baltimorecity.gov) / 410.396.3884. If your records are oversized or of a nature that is not easily stored in the required box size, please reach out to the BCA-RMC to determine acceptable alternatives.

**All boxes must be correctly constructed, filled, and labeled.** Visual instructions on box assembly can be found [here](#). When boxing records, please do not overfill or underfill with files. You should be able to fit your hand easily into the box and pull out an item with minimal resistance, but the file folders should not be slumped or leaning.

Labels include the following information:

- Box number
- Retention schedule (RDA) number
- Department or agency name, including bureau or division as appropriate
- Title of record and brief contents description
- Date range of the box contents (i.e. 1974-1976, FY2022, Sept-Nov 2005).

The box number for your records may not start at '1' if your office has previously transferred records of the same type. Contact Records Management staff to verify box numbering.

The schedule number (labeled "accession number" on the box) and title of the records are taken from the RDA for that group of records.

The brief contents description might include the names or numbers of the first and last file in the box, contract number(s), project title, etc. to distinguish the contents of one box from another when the record title is the same. A date range might serve as the brief content description for records like correspondence or cashier stubs if they are typically filed by date in your office. The box numbers and contents must be accurately reflected on the RTR form (Stage 3).

All boxes require a date to ensure that they are retained for the correct period of time at the BCA-RMC. This should be a date that describes the time period that the records were created, in use, or retired (if the retention period starts at the completion of a project or contract).

During the boxing and labeling process, it is beneficial to create an [inventory spreadsheet](#), which will make it simple to complete the required RTR form (Stage 3). If you are transferring permanent or historical records, you may be asked to submit this inventory and any applicable indexes or information that will assist the City Archivists in cataloging, locating, and retrieving files.

**All boxes must be constructed and [labeled properly](#)** so that they can be identified, retained, and disposed of correctly. At the discretion of the CRMO, **your transfer may be refused and returned to your office if boxes are constructed incorrectly or labeled in such a way that Records Management staff cannot confirm them against the approved Records Transfer Request form.**

### **Stage 3. RTR Form.**

To formally request a transfer of materials to the BCA-RMC, submit a [Records Transfer Request form](#) (RTR) no less than **3 weeks** prior to your preferred transfer timeframe. This 3-week period is required to allow the CRMO time to review the RTR and request modifications or additional information if needed. This also provides enough notice for the CRMO and the chosen relocation services provider to attempt to accommodate your target timeframe. The sooner our office receives your RTR form, the sooner it may be approved, and better the likelihood of scheduling the transfer on your date of choice.

To complete an RTR, you will need the retention schedule(s) that applies to the records you wish to transfer and an accurate inventory of the boxes. All boxes transferred to the BCA-RMC **must** be documented on the RTR, including record title, description and date information. RTR forms are available electronically and **should be returned to the CRMO as electronic documents**. Please submit the RTR form(s) in their original file format (not as a PDF or scan) to assist with data entry into the records management inventory system.

A transfer date will not be given until after the RTR(s) have been **reviewed and approved**. RTR review may take up to 5 business days to complete. If an RTR is filled out incorrectly, it will be returned for modifications, which could potentially delay the transfer. **Records that arrive at the BCA-RMC without a scheduled transfer date or a pre-approved RTR may be refused and returned to your office at the discretion of the CRMO.**

During the review stage, you may be asked to supply a more detailed listing of the individual files or folders in each box for cataloging purposes. Some records have special identifiers, such as ordinance or case numbers, that may be required. If you use any of these identifiers, please discuss which information should be included on your detailed inventory with Records Management staff.

#### **Stage 4. Schedule Transfer.**

After you receive an approved RTR from the CRMO, a transfer date will be coordinated and finalized. **Records Management staff will do their best to meet reasonable transfer date requests but cannot guarantee that your preferred dates will be available.** If the transfer requires the use of a third-party relocation service, the date will depend on their availability as well as that of BCA-RMC staff. Due to staffing constraints, BCA-RMC staff are not able to pick up boxes for transfer.

For smaller transfers (typically 20 boxes or less), it may be economical to have members of your staff deliver the records with the use of a personal or work vehicle. If you choose this option, we ask that your staff unload the boxes and provide shelving assistance upon delivery. This may include placing boxes directly onto shelves or other areas. Therefore, please ensure that the staff member delivering the transfer is able-bodied and prepared to assist.

Larger transfers typically rely on a relocation services vendor. As of 2024, [Walters Relocations](#) is the City contracted vendor. The cost of the records transfer is usually assumed by the agency that intends to transfer materials to the BCA-RMC. Limited funds to assist smaller departments with transfers may be available through the Department of Legislative Reference; inquire with the CRMO.

During records pick-up, a designated member of your staff must be present to direct the relocation crew to the correct boxes and monitor the loading process. This ensures that every box you intend to send has been loaded onto the delivery vehicle and any other materials stored in close proximity are not loaded unexpectedly. The designated staff person should refer to your approved RTR during records pick-up to assist this process.

#### **Stage 5. Finalize Transfer.**

After your records are transferred and shelved, Records Management staff will confirm the receipt of each box on your RTR and note its shelf location in our inventory system. Any discrepancies between the boxes received and the boxes declared on your RTR will be investigated.

If the records have a limited retention period, they will be maintained at the BCA-RMC for the rest of their lifecycle. When they become eligible for disposal, Records Management staff request the required destruction certificates and schedule secure destruction.

Records designated as permanent/historical will be assigned to a record group (BRG) and become part of the City Archives. Depending on any applicable access restrictions, permanent city government records are typically made available to the public.

During this stage, to reference or recall any material sent to the BCA-RMC, please contact us at [rm.dlr@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:rm.dlr@baltimorecity.gov) to discuss available options.