

# U.S. OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

## OPERATING MANUAL UPDATE

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Washington, DC 20415

December 14, 2001

### The Guide to Personnel Recordkeeping

Update 8

Summary of Changes

#### NOTE TO USERS

**The Guide to Personnel Recordkeeping** is in electronic format only. It has not been printed and distributed by the U.S. Government Printing Office since fiscal year 2000. A complete and current copy of the Guide can be found on OPM's website by selecting "Guide to Personnel Recordkeeping" at <http://www.opm.gov/feodata/persdoc.htm>.

For the convenience of those who are maintaining the GPO printed copies of The Guide, we have attached not only the pages we have changed, but also the pages that were printed on the front or back of those pages. For example, we changed page 2-3 but we've attached pages 2-3 and 2-4 because page 2-3 was printed on the front of page 2-4.

Remove		Insert	Explanation of Changes
Page	Identification	Page	
2-3 thru 2-4	Update 4 October 31, 1997	2-3 thru 2-4	Updates the address zip code extension for the National Personnel Records Center ( page 2-3).
3-3 thru 3-4	Update 3 July 31, 1997	3-3 thru 3-4	Removes the SF 1150-A. This form has been cancelled by OPM. ( page 3-4).
3-35 thru 3-36	Update 3 July 31, 1997	3-35 thru 3-36	Removes the SF 1150-A. This form has been cancelled by OPM. ( page 3-36).
3-37 thru 3-38	Update 3 July 31, 1997	3-37 thru 3-38	Designates the Welfare to Work Program form as obsolete. ( page 3-37).

The Guide to Personnel Recordkeeping (2)

Summary of Changes — continued

Remove		Insert	Explanation of Changes
Page	Identification	Page	
4-3 thru 4-4	Update 7 May 31,2001	4-3 thru 4-4	Updates the address zip code extension for the National Personnel Records Center ( page 4-3).
7-11 thru 7-12	Update 6 October 31, 2000	7-11 thru 7-12	Updates the address zip code extension for the National Personnel Records Center ( page 7-12).
8-3 thru 8-4	Update 7 May 31,2001	8-3 thru 8-4	Removes the SF 1150-A. This form has been cancelled by OPM. ( page 8-3).

## Requesting Records for Prior Service

### Requesting records

The personnel office must request the personnel records for new employees with prior Federal civilian service when the employee begins work. Where and how to request prior service records depends on the type of prior service the employee had and whether he or she is currently a Federal employee.

### National Personnel Records Center

Always contact the National Personnel Records Center to make sure all prior service records are filed together. The employee may not list all prior service in the application documents; a former employer may have failed to check for all prior service records.

Request both personnel and medical folders. Send the requests to **National Archives and Records Administration, National Personnel Records Center, 111 Winnebago Street, St. Louis, MO 63118-4126.**

Personnel Folders	Employee Medical Folders
Send a Standard Form 127, Request for Official Personnel Folder, in duplicate, to request any personnel folder(s).	Send a Standard Form 184, Request for Employee Medical Folder, to request any medical folder(s).

Note that there are two separate forms to request both the personnel and medical folders. Performance records that are transferred from agency to agency will be on the left side of the personnel folder.

### Previous or current employer

Records generally will be with the previous employer if the person:

- ! is or has been on that employer's rolls within 90 days prior to the new appointment;
- ! is receiving severance pay;
- ! is on the previous employer's reemployment priority list;
- ! was last employed in the Foreign Service and has separated within the year prior to the new appointment.

Send the previous employer a note requesting the personnel folder (including performance records) and medical folder. Include a copy of the Standard Form 50, Notification of Personnel Action, appointing the person. (If it is not available, use a copy of the Standard Form 52, Request for Personnel Action, or other approved document showing the appointment and effective date.)

**Requesting Records for Prior Service, Continued**

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**Employers using transcripts**

Some employers who are not within the Office of Personnel Management's recordkeeping authority do not transfer personnel records. These employers will provide a transcript of service and documents on benefits. The benefits documents generally include the equivalent of the Official Personnel Folder copy of health insurance, life insurance, retirement, and Thrift Savings Plan documents. If the employer has a leave system similar to the civil service, the benefits documents may include information on the employee's leave balances. Instead of requesting the personnel and medical folders from these employers, request a transcript of service, benefits documents, and leave balances.

Employers who provide transcripts of service include:

- ! Architect of the Capitol
- ! Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System
- ! Central Intelligence Agency
- ! Congressional Budget Office
- ! District of Columbia Government
- ! Federal Bureau of Investigation
- ! Tennessee Valley Authority
- ! U.S. Botanical Gardens
- ! U.S. House of Representatives
- ! U.S. Senate.

The Tennessee Valley Authority's transcript is a microfiche copy of their personnel records.

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## General Filing Procedures, Continued

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**Obsolete Forms** Because of legislative or procedural changes in human resource programs, specific forms may become obsolete. They may be replaced by other forms or documents. The entire process under which the forms were created may be discontinued. Even though the form is obsolete, the reason for keeping the form as a part of the employee's history may still exist. The form may still be filed appropriately as a long-term document in the personnel folder. Such obsolete forms are listed in the tables of this chapter as documents authorized for long-term retention in the personnel folder.

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**Procedures** Before filing documents in the personnel folder:

- Step 1. Make sure the document should be filed in the personnel folder. Some documents must never be filed in the personnel folder. Other documents belong in case files rather than the personnel folder.
  - Step 2. Eliminate information not allowed in the folder, for example, social security numbers of other employees or references to the employee's race or ethnicity. Use a grease pencil or cut the inappropriate information out of the document before filing it.
  - Step 3. Place the document correctly -  
On the right or left-side; and  
In chronological order.
- 

**Placement - Right Side** The right side of the personnel folder is reserved for long-term documents. Only documents authorized by the Office of Personnel Management may be placed on the right side of the folder. These documents are listed in the tables in this chapter. Note that these instructions cover filing only. For information on when and how to create the document, refer to the appropriate program guidance.

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**General Filing Procedures, Continued**

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**Placement -  
Left Side**

The left side of the personnel folder is used for temporary documents. In a few cases, program guidance requires that a document be filed on the left side of the personnel folder. Those cases are listed in the tables in this chapter. Documents not listed in the tables **may** be filed in the personnel folder at the agency's option. Agencies may choose to file other material on the left side of the folder as long as:

1. The document relates to the individual who is the subject of the folder - general documentation of personnel operations is not appropriate for filing in the personnel folder;
2. The document is a personnel record - travel, payroll, and financial disclosure records are not personnel records;
3. Office of Personnel Management guidance does not prohibit filing the document in the folder - prohibited documents are listed in the tables in this chapter;
4. Other guidance does not require the material be filed in separate files - for example, documentation of health benefits enrollments under temporary continuation of coverage.

**Examples** of material that may be filed on the left side:

Current position description;

Standard Form 1152, Designation of Beneficiary for Unpaid Compensation;

Letters of reprimand or caution.

**Examples** of material that should not be filed on the left side:

Time and attendance reports;

Records on claims under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act;

Equal Employment Opportunity complaint records.

When an employee leaves the agency, only specified temporary documents are transferred with the personnel folder. These documents include performance information, notice of employee indebtedness to the health benefits fund, and records of leave data (Standard Form 1150). Chapter 7 contains more information on transferring personnel folders.

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<p><b>GARNISHMENT</b></p> <p>Documents about garnishment of an employee's wages</p>	<p><b>Do not file</b> these documents in the personnel folder.</p>
<p><b>GRIEVANCE</b></p> <p>Grievance files and correspondence</p>	<p><b>Do not file</b> these documents in the personnel folder.</p>
<p><b>MEDICAL DISABILITY</b></p> <p><b>Standard Form 256</b> Self-Identification of Medical Disability</p>	<p><b>Do not file</b> such documents in the personnel folder.</p>
<p><b>MEDICAL RECORDS</b></p> <p>Records on employee occupational illnesses, accidents, injuries, exposures, and other medical or health maintenance matters. Examples of medical records include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Agency dispensary or health unit</b> files or records</li> <li><b>Certification of disability</b>, job readiness and need for reasonable accommodation</li> <li><b>Standard Form 177 (obsolete)</b> Statement of Physical Ability for Light Duty Work</li> <li><b>Records</b> and correspondence about an employee's claim for compensation from the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs, for a job related disease or injury</li> </ul>	<p><b>Do not file</b> medical records in the personnel folder.</p>
<p><i>Table 3-G continued on next page</i></p>	

<p><b>MEDICARE ELIGIBILITY</b></p> <p><b>Office of Personnel Management Form 1528 (obsolete)</b> Notification of Earnings for Medicare Eligibility</p>	<p>File the form on the <b>right side</b>.</p>
<p><b>MINORITY GROUP IDENTIFIERS</b></p> <p>These include:</p> <p><b>Office of Personnel Management Form 1468</b> Race and National Origin Identification-Hawaii</p> <p><b>Standard Form 181</b> Race and National Origin Identification</p>	<p><b>Do not file</b> any designation of minority status in the personnel folder.</p>
<p><b>PAYROLL, LEAVE, FINANCIAL RECORDS</b></p> <p>These records include: Employee's tax withholding forms Leave requests Statements of financial withholdings Time and attendance records</p>	<p><b>Do not file</b> payroll records in the personnel folder.</p> <p>NOTE: This prohibition does not include the Standard Form 1150. This form should be filed on the left side when the employee leaves the agency.</p>
<p><b>PERFORMANCE</b></p> <p>Ratings of record and related material</p>	<p>Follow agency guidance for filing performance records in the Employee Performance File System.</p> <p>Refer to Chapter 7 of this Guide for instructions on filing performance records in the personnel folder when the employee leaves the agency.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;"><i>Table 3-G continued on next page</i></p>	



<p><b>RECONSTRUCTION</b></p> <p>Agency notice that the personnel folder was reconstructed</p>	<p>File the agency notice on the <b>right side</b>. The notice will be the top document on the reconstructed portion of the folder.</p>
<p><b>SUPERVISORY/MANAGERIAL PROBATION</b></p> <p>Evidence of satisfactory completion of probationary period for managerial and supervisory positions</p>	<p>File the form established under agency procedures for documenting satisfactory completion of probationary period on the <b>right side</b>.</p> <p>NOTE: Performance appraisals/performance ratings are not to be filed as part of the probationary period completion documentation.</p>
<p><b>WELFARE TO WORK PROGRAM</b></p> <p><b>Office of Personnel Management Form 1635</b> (Obsolete) Welfare to Work Program</p>	<p><b>Do not file</b> this document in the folder.</p>

### Table 3-H: Changes in Filing Requirements

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**Introduction**

This Table contains the rules to follow when **filing requirements** change. Instructions on filing specific documents as long-term records in the Official Personnel Folder may change whether or not the requirements to prepare the document change. An obsolete form may continue to be filed because it contains information important to the individual's career history. Current forms may no longer be filed as long-term records because the information they contain applies only to the current agency. This Table covers changes in filing requirements for long-term (right side) Official Personnel Folder documents.

**Example:** The Immigration and Naturalization Service form I-9, "Employment Eligibility Verification" was filed on the right side of the Official Personnel Folder. Effective January 1997, the filing requirement was changed and the form was no longer authorized as a right side document. The form and the Immigration and Naturalization Service's implementing instructions did not change.

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**Document Removal**

When the requirement to file a document as a long-term Official Personnel Folder record is rescinded, agencies should issue instructions for handling the document. When appropriate, the agency may file the document as a temporary or left hand side Official Personnel Folder record. Agencies may also establish their own separate filing procedures.

Elimination of the long term Official Personnel Folder filing requirement is not authorization to destroy the document. The National Archives and Records Administration issues instructions on records disposition. The General Records Schedules provide disposal authorization for records common to a number of Federal agencies. Agencies must follow these instructions on records disposition.

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4	<p>Ask the National Personnel Records Center to search for personnel and payroll records. Address the request to:</p> <p>National Archives and Records Administration, National Personnel Records Center, 111 Winnebago Street, St. Louis, MO 63118-4126, ATTENTION: Chief, Civilian Reference Branch (DO NOT OPEN IN MAILROOM).</p>	
	<p><b>To request a search for the personnel folder:</b></p> <p>Submit a Standard Form 127, Request for Official Personnel Folder (OPF). In the Remarks section, put:</p> <p>"The OPF for this employee is lost or destroyed. This is to request that a search be made by NPRC for the OPF of the named employee."</p> <p>This statement is required to insure that the missing Official Personnel Folder was not inadvertently returned to the National Personnel Records Center.</p>	<p><b>To request a search for payroll records:</b></p> <p>Submit a memo on agency letterhead. Include the employee's name, social security number, agency in which employed and the following:</p> <p>"This is to request a search of any payroll records on the named employee that may be stored at NPRC."</p> <p>Not all agencies store payroll records at the National Personnel Records Center. If NPRC does not have the records, contact the agency.</p>
5	<p>Obtain any copies of certificates establishing the employee's qualifications for specific jobs. Contact the office that issued appointment certificates for the individual.</p>	
6	<p>Use records from the investigative files and security clearances, where appropriate, that document Federal service.</p>	
<p><i>Continued on next page</i></p>		

Step	Action	
7	<p>Prepare a transcript of service. Refer to Chapter 7 of this <i>Guide</i> for instructions on transcript preparation.</p> <p>An introductory paragraph should be added to the transcript identifying the documents used to prepare the transcript.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> "The following transcript of Federal service was prepared from a Standard Form 2806, Individual Retirement Record, maintained by the Office of Personnel Management."</p>	
8	<p>Follow instructions in Chapter 2 of this <i>Guide</i> to select the correct folder. File the transcript of service in the folder. The transcript will be the top form of the reconstructed portion of the personnel folder. Documents located during the reconstruction process should be filed beneath the transcript.</p>	
9	<p>Use the tables in Chapter 3 of this <i>Guide</i>. Documents listed as prohibited in Chapter 3 may not be filed in a reconstructed personnel folder.</p>	
	<p><b>Documents that may be filed with the transcript:</b></p>	<p><b>Documents that MAY NOT be filed with the transcript:</b></p>
	<p>! Any documents that support benefits ! Any Standard Forms 50, Notification of Personnel Actions</p>	<p>! Standard Form 2806 or 3100, Individual Retirement Record ! Computer-generated employment histories ! Payroll records ! Social Security earnings report</p>

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## **NOTICE TO SEPARATED EMPLOYEES - RETENTION OF PERSONNEL AND MEDICAL FOLDERS**

Long-term records documenting individuals' Federal careers are stored in the Official Personnel Folder. The employee received copies of these records when they were created. When an employee separates from Federal service, the last employing agency sends the Official Personnel Folder to the National Personnel Records Center for storage. Normally, the agency sends the Folder within 120 days after the employee separates. The National Personnel Records Center retains the Folders for 65 years after separation.

Former employees' requests for copies of their personnel records must be in writing and should include:

- C the full name (or names) used while employed;
- C social security number;
- C date of birth; and
- C if known, the year of separation and last employing agency.

**For Copies of Specific Documents or a Copy of the Entire Folder Write to:**

National Personnel Records Center  
Civilian Personnel Records  
111 Winnebago Street  
St. Louis, MO 63118-4126

Since 1984 the Employee Medical Folder has been used to store long-term occupational medical records that were created during an employee's Federal career. These records do not include records on claims filed under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act. There may not be an Employee Medical Folder for each employee. When an employee for whom there are long-term occupational medical records separates from Federal service, the last employing agency sends the Employee Medical Folder to the National Personnel Records Center. The National Personnel Records Center retains these Folders for 30 years after separation.

Former employees' requests for copies of their Employee Medical Folder should be in writing and include all identifying information (name, social security number, date of birth). These requests should be sent to:

National Personnel Records Center  
Civilian Personnel Records  
111 Winnebago Street  
St. Louis, MO 63118-4126

**Personnel Recordkeeping**

## Sending Records

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### Packaging

Personnel records should be securely packaged to be sure that they arrive in good condition. Transcripts or individual folders may be sent in an envelope. Folders require envelopes measuring 11 by 13 inches. The envelopes should be tightly sealed. Reinforced envelopes or those made from material similar to “Ty-Vek” are recommended.

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### Carriers

Employees may not be authorized to carry their own records to the next employer. Under the Privacy Act, employees are entitled to copies of their records but the agency is responsible for transferring the employee’s official records to the next employer.

Records may be sent by regular mail. Certified mail or a commercial package shipping service is the preferred method since these methods allow agencies to verify that the records were delivered to the addressee.

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### National Personnel Records Center

When records are transferred to the National Personnel Records Center, they should be sent to:

National Personnel Records Center  
Civilian Personnel Records  
111 Winnebago Street  
St. Louis, MO 63118-4126

A small number of folders may be sent in an envelope. Larger numbers of folders should be sent in a carton. Each carton should include a list of the enclosed folders, identifying each employee by name and social security number.

Employee Medical Folders may be in the same envelope or carton as personnel folders. Medical folders should be placed after the personnel folders (Official Personnel Folders, Merged Records Personnel Folders, or Foreign Service Folders).

Agencies are not required to notify the National Personnel Records Center before sending folders. The National Personnel Records Center will **not** issue a receipt for records sent by regular mail.

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United States  
Office of  
Personnel Management  
December 5th, 2001

# PERSONNEL DOCUMENTATION

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Our Agency issues Governmentwide guidance on documenting individuals' Federal employment. OPM and the agency human resources offices use these documents to make decisions about employees' rights and benefits throughout their careers. Here you'll find instructions for Federal agencies' human resources offices on preparing personnel actions and keeping the Official Personnel Folder.

## [Guide to Processing Personnel Actions](#)

Last revised November 4, 2001. How to prepare personnel actions, Standard Forms 52 and 50.

## **Guide to Personnel Recordkeeping**

Last revised May 31, 2001. How to create, use and transfer Official Personnel Folders. [Adobe Acrobat PDF File](#) (588KB)

## [Updates](#)

The most recent changes to the Guide to Processing Personnel Actions and the Guide to Personnel Recordkeeping.

## **Service Credit For Leave**

What civilian and military service counts toward in setting an employee's annual leave accrual rate. [Adobe Acrobat PDF File](#) (145KB)

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