

USF Records: Public Records, Confidentiality, and Retention

Florida Public Records Law provides that most USF records are public and open to inspection by any person requesting such access. Certain records may contain information that is confidential and therefore exempt from disclosure. Confidential information which may not be disclosed includes, but is not limited to, student records and social security numbers.

This compliance-in-a-nutshell document addresses common questions on this topic and guides employees in doing the right thing; however, this guidance is not intended to substitute for an employee's consultation of official USF regulation or policy.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

"Public records" are defined very broadly in Florida and include e-mail, sound recordings, photos, and just about anything made or received in the transaction of official business. Always remember that as a public employee, you are subject to public scrutiny, so use common sense—"Would I want this shared on social media or in the news?"

Prior to destroying any record, university procedures must be followed. USF has established record retention schedules that provide the length of time that every public record must be maintained. Be aware that even public records may contain confidential information that may not be disclosed because its disclosure is protected, such as social security numbers, medical information, student information, and employee performance evaluations.

Consult the following USF policies and regulations for more details:

- [USF Policy 0-106](#): Public Records Law Compliance and Record Confidentiality
- [USF Policy 0-019](#): Confidentiality and Disclosure of Protected Health Information (PHI)
- [USF Policy 5-012](#): Records Retention and Disposition
- [USF Regulation 2.0021](#): Student Records

WHAT DO I DO IF I RECEIVE A PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST?

Immediately notify your supervisor. In most cases, the Office of the General Counsel should be contacted for assistance in responding to the request. Follow your unit's written procedures for fulfilling public records requests.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE?

Contact the [Office of the General Counsel](#) at 813-974-2131 or email them at usflegal@usf.edu