

Retention of Records

The State of Ohio requires social workers to retain their clinical records for at least seven years unless a longer period of retention is required by federal law or is the generally accepted standard of practice.

CSWMFT Laws and Rules

4757-5-09 Standards of ethical practice and professional conduct: record keeping.

(A) Record keeping requirements: For each client/consumer of services, a licensee or registrant shall keep records of the dates of counseling, social work, or marriage and family therapy services, types of counseling, social work, or marriage and family therapy services, termination, and billing information. Records held by the licensee shall be kept for seven years. Records held or owned by government agencies or educational institutions are not subject to this requirement. Licensees shall keep all records in a secure location and shall allow only authorized persons access to records.

(E) Counselors, social workers, and marriage and family therapists shall store records following termination of services to ensure reasonable future access. Records should be maintained as required by this rule unless a longer retention period is required by statute or relevant contracts.

During this time, the clinical record must be kept safe and protected to ensure confidentiality and should be accessible and available to clients. After the period of retention, the files may be destroyed in a manner that ensures confidentiality. Individual insurance companies may mandate longer periods of retention. It is the clinical social worker's responsibility to be aware of these requirements. NASW Assurance Services recommends lifetime retention of case files.

Records must be kept in a safe, secure, and double locked location (such as a locked file cabinet in a locked room). For more information on record retention, please refer to NASW's Legal Defense Fund brief, Social Workers and Record Retention Requirements, available online [here](#).