

Document Retention and Destruction Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Document Retention and Destruction Policy is to establish guidelines for the retention, storage, and destruction of documents and records of the Gentle Journey Foundation. This policy ensures that important organizational, financial, legal, and program records are maintained appropriately, while also ensuring that unnecessary records are properly disposed of in a timely manner.

This policy supports compliance with IRS regulations, nonprofit governance best practices, and responsible organizational management.

2. Policy Statement

The Gentle Journey Foundation maintains records in both electronic and physical formats. Records will be retained for the appropriate period of time based on legal requirements, operational needs, and nonprofit best practices. After the retention period has expired, documents may be securely destroyed unless there is a legal, audit, or investigation requirement to retain them longer.

3. Suspension of Record Destruction

If the Foundation is involved in any investigation, audit, legal action, insurance claim, or dispute, all document destruction must be suspended immediately for any records related to the matter until the issue is fully resolved.

This is commonly known as a document hold.

4. Record Retention Schedule

The following is the recommended retention schedule for the Gentle Journey Foundation.

Permanent Records (Retain Permanently)

The following documents must be retained permanently:

Articles of Incorporation

IRS Determination Letter (501(c)(3) letter)

Bylaws and amendments

Board meeting minutes

Board resolutions

Governance policies

Annual reports

IRS Form 990 filings

Financial statements (annual)

Audit reports

Major contracts and agreements

Property and asset records

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Insurance policies (expired and active)
Donor records for major gifts
Strategic plans
Organizational history and important program records

7-Year Retention

Retain the following documents for 7 years:

Financial records
Bank statements
Check copies
Deposit records
Credit card statements
Expense reports
Invoices
Receipts
Payroll records
Tax workpapers
Grant agreements and grant reports
Donor contribution records
Program assistance applications
Vendor contracts (after expiration)
Insurance claims records
Vehicle records and maintenance records
Mileage logs
Employee and contractor records (after termination)
Lease agreements (after expiration)

3-Year Retention

Retain the following documents for 3 years:
Routine correspondence
Volunteer records
Event records
Internal reports
Routine program documentation
Meeting agendas
Non-essential communications

5. Electronic Records

Electronic records are considered official records and must be stored in a secure and organized manner. Electronic files should be backed up regularly using cloud storage or external backup systems when possible.

Recommended categories for electronic storage:

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Governance
Financial
Donors
Programs
Assistance Applications
Insurance
Vehicles & Equipment
Partnerships
Media & Marketing
Grants
Legal & Contracts

6. Destruction of Documents

After the retention period has expired, documents may be destroyed in a secure manner.

Acceptable destruction methods include:

Shredding physical documents
Permanently deleting electronic files
Secure digital file deletion
Disposal through secure document destruction services
Documents containing sensitive information such as donor records, financial information, personal information, or applications must be securely destroyed.

7. Responsibility

The Board of Directors and designated officers of the Gentle Journey Foundation are responsible for ensuring that records are properly maintained and that this policy is followed.

The Secretary and Treasurer typically oversee document retention related to governance and financial records.

8. Policy Review

This Document Retention and Destruction Policy will be reviewed periodically by the Board of Directors and updated as necessary to ensure compliance with nonprofit regulations and organizational needs.

9. Approval

This Document Retention and Destruction Policy was adopted by the Board of Directors of the Gentle Journey Foundation on: