

Personnel Records: What to Keep & Where

Personnel records contain employee information essential for handling various employment-related matters.

Maintaining records in separate files allows managers, employees, and outside auditors to see the information they need to make decisions yet does not allow inappropriate access. In larger organizations where multiple people need access to different types of employee information, employee records are often separated into three types of files:

- General personnel file
- Confidential employee file
- Common file

When determining whether to place a document in the personnel file, employers should consider if the document contains sensitive information, such as:

- Date of birth
- Marital status
- Dependent information
- Social Security numbers
- Medical information
- Immigration status
- National origin
- Race
- Gender
- Religion
- Sexual orientation
- Criminal history
- Financial history
- Subjective statements or accusations

If the document includes these things, consider storing it in the confidential employee file.

The next consideration is whether the document is relevant to a supervisor who may review this file when making employment decisions. Determine if it is related to the employee's:

- Performance
- Knowledge
- Skills
- Abilities
- Behavior

If the document concerns these things, then it should be included in the employee's general personnel file.



Basic Personnel File

- Recruiting and screening documents
 - Applications
 - Resumes
 - Educational transcripts
- Job descriptions
- Records relating to
 - Job offers
 - Promotion
 - Demotion
 - Transfer
 - Layoff
 - Rates of pay and other forms of compensation
 - Education and training records
- Records relating to other employment practices (including policy acknowledgments and agreements)
- Letters of recognition
- Warnings, counseling and disciplinary notices
- Performance evaluations and goal setting records
- Termination records

Confidential Employee File

- Equal employment opportunity (EEO)/invitation to self-identify disability or veteran status records
- Reference/background checks
- Drug test results
- Immigration (I-9) forms
- Medical/insurance records
 - Medical questionnaires
 - Benefit enrollment forms
 - Benefit claims
 - Doctors' notes
 - Accommodation requests



- Leave of absence records
- Child support/garnishments
- Litigation documents
- Workers' compensation claims
- Investigation records
 - Resulting relevant disciplinary action, counseling or other direct communications are placed in the employee's general personnel file
- Requests for employment/payroll verification

Common Files

Some records, such as Form I-9 audits, are maintained in common files where they are easily accessible for specific purposes.

