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Timelines for File Retention

As discussed in the WSBA’s [Law Firm Guide to Document Retention](#), the following dates are just suggestions. You should consider the needs of your practice as well as any special obligations you may have under state or federal law.

Under RPC/LLLT RPC 1.15B, you are required to retain trust account records and related documents for at least seven (7) years. Under RPC/LLLT RPC 1.15A, you are also required to maintain records of property you safeguard for the client or a third party.

PRACTICE SPECIALTY	SUGGESTED RETENTION PERIOD
Bankruptcy Claims & Filings	7 years after discharge of debtor, payment of claim, or discharge of trustee or receiver
Contract Action	7 years after satisfaction of judgment, dismissal, or settlement.
Criminal Cases	7 years after date of acquittal or length of incarceration
Dissolution	7 years after entry of final judgment or dismissal of action, or date at which settlement agreement is no longer effective, except when minor children are involved and then at the young attaining majority plus three years
Leases	7 years after termination of lease
Original Wills	Return to client after signing and conclusion of matter or file with local court that is most appropriate, such as based on the client’s last known residence.
Probate Claims & Estates	Excluding tax, 10 years after final judgment; tax basis information should be kept permanently. Estate planning documents should be retained until the client has passed away and the estate has been closed. Original wills should be provided to the client immediately upon the conclusion of representation.
Real Estate Transactions	Subject to guidelines and tax needs; otherwise 7 years after settlement date, judgment, termination of sale, foreclosure, or other completion of matter; Retain surveys and legal descriptions not of record
Tort Claims (Defense)	7 years after final judgment or dismissal.
Tort Claims (Plaintiff)	7 years after final judgment or dismissal, except when minor involved; then when minor attains majority plus three years
Juveniles	10 years from the date the minor turns eighteen