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Subject:	How SAO manages public records when it comes to Microsoft Teams Chats¬
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Team SAO,

At SAO we pride ourselves in always being professional and respectful in our communication, regardless of medium. In addition, our Office value of transparency reminds us how important it is to manage our records in accordance with state laws around public disclosure and document retention. The addition of Teams Chat to our suite of Microsoft business tools has helped us as we work in our hybrid environment, but it also is a new communication medium that requires ongoing attention to manage well.

To that end, today we're starting a series of tips and reminders about public disclosure, document retention, and how they relate to Teams Chat. A new post on SAO Central goes into detail and includes links to some reference guides we've put together. This guidance is intended to help, but just like a lot of our duties, use of Teams Chat requires professional judgment based on law and policy.

Consider this the start of a regular #WeAreSAO conversation around public records and Teams Chat.

First, here's a rule of thumb I've always used when it comes to public records: **The public needs to be able to learn why government does what it does**, no matter what form that information takes. If that explanatory information exists only in a Teams Chat that disappears after seven days, we aren't meeting our public duty. Teams Chat helps us work efficiently – but taking care with how you use it will help you avoid burden when managing records.

Second, our policy states that Teams Chat is only for transitory communication, but that is a distinction only related to record retention. It is not a distinction that matters for public disclosure. In other words, here's a second rule of thumb: **Transitory communications are disclosable in response to a public records request.**

With those rules of thumb in mind, head over to SAO Central for more. And as always, thank you for your dedication to serving Washingtonians.

Pat McCarthy

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