

Alaska State Medical Board  
Board Issued Guidelines

Subject:	<b><i>Guidelines for Physicians Regarding Records When Retiring, Closing a Practice or Leaving a Group</i></b>
Implemented:	January 12, 2006
Revised:	October 2009
<p>The Alaska State Medical Board has adopted the policy of the American Medical Association, following, to be its guidelines to its licensees with regard to the appropriate disposal of medical records when leaving or closing a practice.</p> <p>American Medical Association's Annotated Opinion No. 7.03 reads:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">A patient's records may be necessary to the patient in the future not only for medical care but also for employment, insurance, litigation, or other reasons. When a physician retires or dies, patients should be notified and urged to find a new physician and should be informed that upon authorization, records will be sent to the new physician. Records which may be of value to a patient and which are not forwarded to a new physician should be retained, either by the treating physician, another physician, or such other person lawfully permitted to act as a custodian of the records.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The patients of a physician who leaves a group practice should be notified that the physician is leaving the group. Patients of the physician should also be informed of the physician's new address and offered the opportunity to have their medical records forwarded to the departing physician at his or her new practice location. It is unethical to withhold such information upon request of a patient. If the responsibility of notifying patients falls to the departing physician rather than the group, the group should not interfere with the discharge of these duties by withholding patient lists or other necessary information.</p> <p>The board also recommends that the physician seek the advice of their specialty board when applicable.</p> <p><u>UPDATED October 2009:</u> The board adopted a policy advising physicians who are planning to take a sabbatical, or otherwise close their practice, to advise the board of the location of their medical records prior to their departure so as to facilitate timely access by patients to their medical records.</p>	