

ETHICS ADVISORY PANEL
OPINION #94-9 REQUEST #461
Issued February 23, 1994

The inquiring attorney inquires whether the Rules of Professional Conduct require a lawyer to maintain closed client files for a specific period of time. The inquiring attorney further queries whether there is a specified method of disposal of such records.

The issue raised by this inquiry is not addressed by the Rules of Professional Conduct. However, the Panel directs the inquiring attorney's attention to R.I.G.L. 1956 (1985 Reenactment) § 8-14-2 which states that:

After a period of seven (7) years or more has lapsed since the disposition of a civil case or matter, an attorney may destroy his or her records relative to said case.

The statute does not specify any method of disposal of such records. See also Rule 1.16 entitled "Required Bookkeeping Records" of the Rules of Professional Conduct which set forth an attorney's obligation to maintain certain account, agreements and records for a period of seven (7) years.