**General File Management Checklist**

Create a *File Opening Checklist* for basic file information. Best practices would include a paper copy and the creation of an electronic, appropriately named copy. This document should be very easily retrieved.

Maintain a master list of all files. Best practices would include a paper copy and the creation of an electronic, appropriately named master copy.

If storing files by paper, use a sturdy OUT CARD when removing a file. The OUT CARD should indicate who removed the file, when it was removed, and which file was removed.

Create a policy for identifying physical objects or other documents that cannot be stored with the original file, whether electronically or by paper. This policy will help you locate these necessary objects and documents when needed during the matter, or at the close of the matter when it is time to return them to the client.

Return any original documents to the client when the matter has ended.

If requested, return the file to the client, whether or not the client still owes fees and expenses. Store the file in a safe place (electronic storage with redundant backup will suffice, except for those documents which must be stored in their original forms (e.g., last wills, promissory notes, etc.) Never hold a client’s file hostage for fees, and you should always keep a copy of the file.

Create a *File Closing Checklist,* and when the matter concludes, place it with each file. Best practices would include a paper copy and the creation of an electronic, appropriately named copy, however, if you are “paperless,” best practices would include redundant electronic digital backups.

Maintain a master list of destroyed files, including name, file number, date opened, date closed, date destroyed, and whether it was duplicated using another medium.

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