

# **GSCCCA Data Format Guidelines for Compliance with O.C.G.A. § 15-6-62.1(b)(2)**

## **1. BACKGROUND**

In July 2015, Georgia Senate Bill 135, Act 181 (the Bill) became effective, initiating requirements for Clerks of Superior Court to back-up certain official records. The Bill amends O.C.G.A. § 15-6-62.1(b)(2) requiring Clerks of Superior Court to back up certain *“digitally formatted records that the clerk is statutorily authorized and required to archive with the authority<sup>1</sup> for permanent archiving ... The clerk of superior court shall submit the clerk's records to the authority in a format acceptable to the authority at least monthly, but not later than the fifteenth day following the last day of each month.”*

The purpose of this document is to specify the format of the data that is acceptable to the authority (GSCCCA) for compliance with this code section. This document does *not* specify the method of transmitting the data to the GSCCCA which is defined separately.

## **2. DATA CATEGORIES**

Data to be delivered to the GSCCCA is assumed to be either relational database or individual files such as documents and images. Appropriate formats for these two categories of information are described below.

### **2.1 Databases**

The following format options are acceptable for data stored in relational databases.

- a) The database format that is currently used by the Clerk, assuming the format is either an open format<sup>2</sup> or a format licensed on a reasonable and non-discriminatory basis. Proprietary database formats that are not widely used, or lack convenient ability to be used and licensed for use, are intended to be excluded from this option. This option is believed to be the most convenient for the Clerk.

When such functionality exists in the Clerk’s database management system (DBMS), the databases transmitted should be a back-up file(s) created by procedures native to the DBMS (third party back-up tools are not recommended). So for example, Microsoft SQL Server allows for the creation of database back-up (.BAK) file(s) which is what should be transmitted to the GSCCCA. This requirement is intended to allow for transmitting a

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<sup>1</sup> The term Authority or GSCCCA used herein refers to the Georgia Superior Court Clerks’ Cooperative Authority.

<sup>2</sup> Open Format refers to a publically published format, usually maintained by a standards organization, which can be used and implemented by anyone.

complete and accurate database that is segregated from any concurrent live data processing activities that could otherwise create various data conflict issues.

- b) Extensible Markup Language (XML). Databases in this format are required to be accompanied by a fully documented XML Schema Definition file (XSD). Both the XML database and XSD file must be World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) compliant.
- c) A Flat File format. This format would be an ASCII, Unicode-based, comma separated values (CSV) format with field names in the first row of data and a single row of data for each row of the corresponding database table. There is to be a unique file for each table of fields in the database. The filename for each flat file would be {tablename}.CSV.

Databases in this format require an accompanying file to define the relationships between tables. This file is to also be in CSV format with the following columns of information: parent table filename, child table filename, parent table joining field, child table joining field. Filenames for the relationship file will be {database name}\_REL.CSV.

Further, the database will need to have a data definition file which shall be another CSV format file with a row for each field in all the tables of the database. Each row is to provide: the table name of the field, the field name, the data type of the field (numeric, text, date, etc.) and any other useful characteristics of the data field. The data definition file will have a filename of {database name}\_DDF.CSV.

## **2.2 Images and Documents.**

Other forms of data that are not databases, such as images, documents, etc., may be in any open format or a format that is licensed on a reasonable and non-discriminatory basis. A few examples of data formats that fit these requirements are typically expressed with filename extensions such as: .pdf, .tif, .doc.

## **3. COMPLIANCE VERIFICATION**

Unless otherwise specified by the GSCCCA, the GSCCCA does not assume the responsibility for confirming that files and databases transmitted to the GSCCCA comply with the format requirements specified herein. However, the GSCCCA may, at its discretion, inform Clerks when it believes data transmitted from a Clerk does not comply with an acceptable format.

Acceptance and storing of data delivered by the Clerk (or their designated agent) to the GSCCCA does not constitute a warranty or implication by the GSCCCA that the data complies with an acceptable format as described herein.

Should the characteristics of any data format used by the Clerk change so that at any time after delivery of the data to the GSCCCA the format no longer conforms to the requirements specified herein (as may be amended from time to time), it is the responsibility of the Clerk to be aware of such and re-transmit affected data in an acceptable format.

#### **4. OTHER**

Questions regarding the formats acceptable to the GSCCCA for compliance with the data back-up requirements of O.C.G.A. § 15-6-62.1(b)(2) should be submitted to the GSCCCA Customer Support at [help@gsccca.org](mailto:help@gsccca.org).