

# Memo

**To:** Montana State Library Commission

**From:** Jennie Stapp  
State Librarian

**From:** Tracy Cook, Lead C& L Librarian

**Date:** June 1, 2020

**Re: Public Library Standards Exemption**

According to Administrative Rule, public libraries must certify that they meet Montana’s public library standards by July 25<sup>th</sup> of each year. **The process normally starts the first week in May.** Libraries ability to both meet certain standards and to complete the certification process is currently impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. Therefore, staff recommends that the Commission grant automatic deferrals for two of the public library standards described below.

Staff further recommends that the Commission extend the deadline for libraries to certify that they meet the remaining public library standards until September 1, 2020.

Deferral 1:

10.102.1150G Human Resources Standards: Access (b) The library is open during the week at least the following minimum hours. Many libraries exceed this minimum because the community, the board, and the director recognize that the number of hours of public service leads to greater use by the public. A library with more than one service outlet may use the total nonoverlapping hours of all outlets to meet the minimum requirement;

Population	Minimum	Desirable
less than 3,500	15	25-40
more than 3,500	30	40-50
more than 10,000	40	50-60
more than 25,000	50	60+

Most library facilities in Montana closed during the Governor's Stay at Home Directive at the height of the COVID-19 crisis. Many of them are re-opening with limited hours. As a result, libraries will be unable to comply with this standard.

Deferral 2:

10.102.1150A Public Library Standards: General (c) Monthly, or at least six meetings a year with no gap between meetings greater than 90 days, library board meetings are held in an accessible location at times and a place convenient to the public and according to state laws on public meetings;

As a result of the pandemic the Attorney General's office recommended to local governments that boards and councils limit the number public meetings, and many libraries complied.

There may be other standards that individual libraries cannot meet but these two are the most likely to be problematic for the public libraries. Staff will review other deferral requests and will follow the normal deferral process outlined in Administrative Rule.