



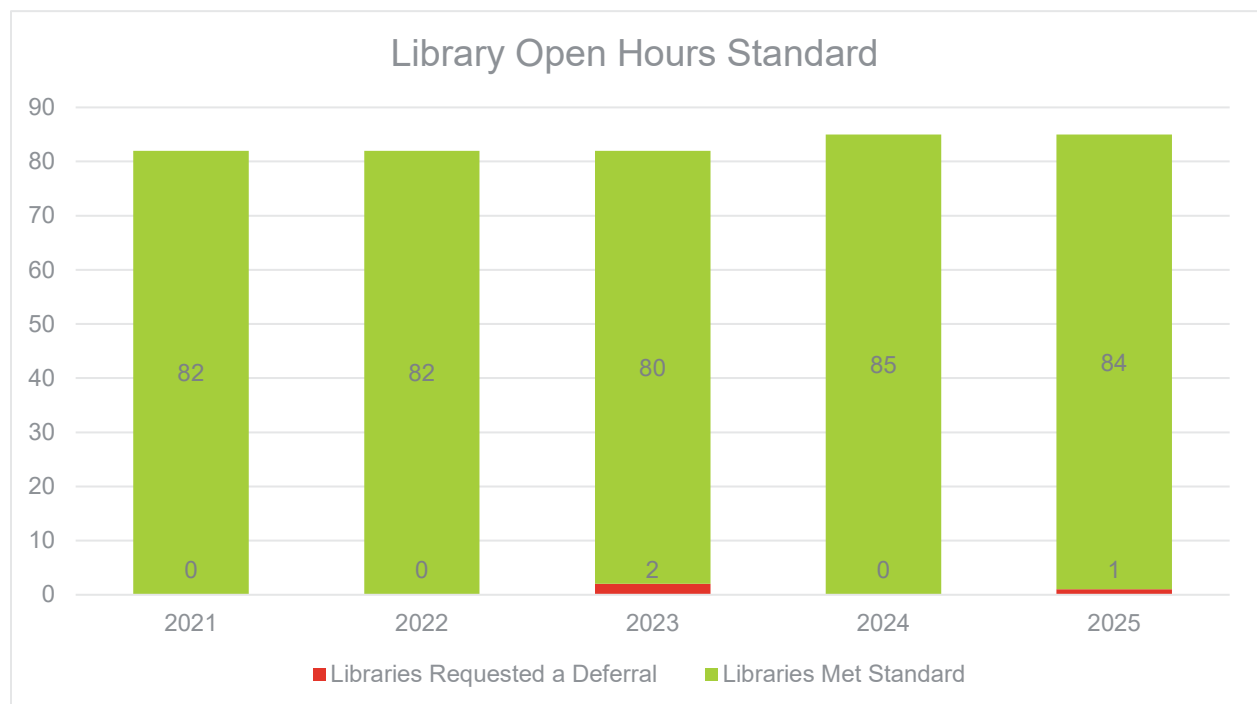
MEMO

To: Montana State Library Commission
From: Jennie Stapp, State Librarian
Subject: Open hours hardship question
Date: November 4, 2025

This response addresses a question from the November 3, 2025 public hearing on Administrative Rule 10.102.1159 regarding open hours for Montana public libraries. The Commission was asked if the rule change was motivated by library requests citing the current standard as a hardship.

Each year, public and tribal college libraries report their open hours through the Public Libraries Survey. In the last five years, 98% to 100% of libraries reported their Public Library Standards met the open hours standard. In 2023, two libraries submitted deferral requests for this standard. In 2025, one library submitted a deferral request. The State Library granted the three deferral requests.

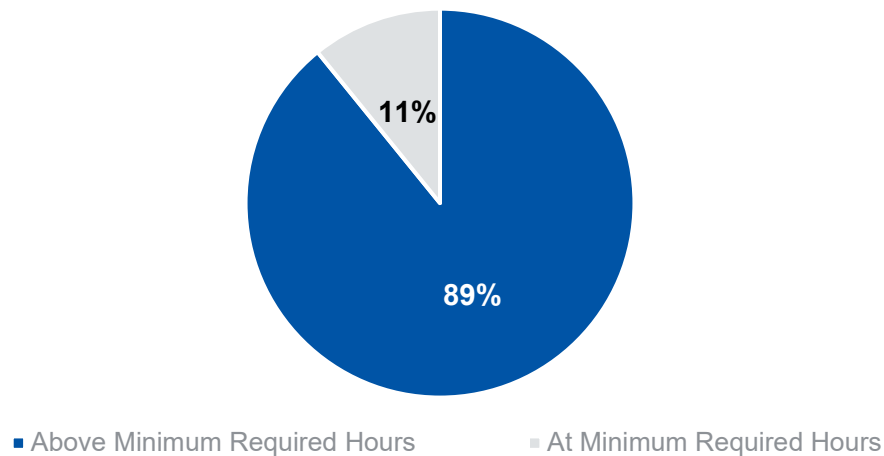
Data Regarding the Library Open Hours Standard





The most recent data, from state fiscal year 2024, includes responses about hours from 83 libraries. Of these, 89% (74 libraries) exceeded the minimum hours required for their Service Area Population as described in the Public Library Standards. The remaining 11% (nine libraries) met the minimum requirement. Three libraries reached the minimum either by including hours from branch locations or changing their hours part way through the year.

Library Reported Open Hours, FY 2024



The chart below shows the average open hours reported by libraries in 2024, grouped by the Service Area Population categories in Administrative Rule 10.102.1159 (1). In every category the average open hours libraries reported were higher than the minimum required. For this chart, only the hours shown for each main library are included; branch library hours were not factored into these averages.

Average Open Hours Reported Per Service Area Population Group, FY 2024

