



Pennsylvania Department of Education

Guidelines for Library Holidays, Modified Hours, and Other Closures

A. Purpose

Public libraries provide public spaces where people congregate, share their common cultural and scientific heritage, and create knowledge. They offer vitally essential resources used for educational and recreational purposes. To provide effective service, libraries are expected to maintain regular hours of operation best suited to the needs of their community. The Office of Commonwealth Libraries recognizes that while a standardized schedule is ideal, a reasonable number of holidays and other closings are expected. There are also cases of emergency closures and other extended planned closures.

The goal of these guidelines is to provide guidance on effective service and to identify common types of exceptions to library schedules. These guidelines are not intended to address state aid eligibility. Please direct any questions regarding State Aid to RA-stateaid@pa.gov.

Notification of atypical closings to the district/system and the Office of Commonwealth Libraries is intended to allow these organizations to respond to questions from the public and public officials.

B. Authorization

As defined in Title 24. PA. C.S. Education – Public Library Code, § 9312

(h) Powers and duties. --The advisory council shall have the following powers and duties:

(2) Advise and make recommendations to the Governor, the Secretary of Education, and the State Librarian regarding the general policies and operations of the State Library and the State system of aid to libraries.

(5) Promulgate rules and regulations for the approval of plans for the use of state funds and for the process and procedure to appeal funding and eligibility decisions.

C. Definitions

Workdays:

Any day of the week in which a library would regularly be open to the public.

Regular Hours:

The predefined weekly hours and schedule posted for the public by the library.

Week:

The period from Monday through Sunday.

Holiday:

Any federal or Commonwealth of Pennsylvania observed holiday.

D. General Guidance:

These guidelines are recommendations and best practices.

- Consult with the District Consultant and/or System Administrator to develop a schedule of open hours most appropriate for the community.
 - Refer to system agreement and/or district negotiated agreement for specific expectations.
- Library hours should include morning, afternoon, evening, and weekend hours based on actual and potential library user needs.
- Create a schedule that is publicly accessible by the beginning of each year.
 - Post the days and the hours when the library is open in a prominent location
 - Include library hours in printed and online information describing the library and its services.
- Plan closings to have the least impact on the community while maintaining library services and programming.
 - Arrange an adequate public relations campaign to keep library users informed of closings and the availability of alternative locations for library services.
 - Post announcement of library hour changes on social media sites, the library website, and posted hours signs.
 - Notify any nearby local libraries, the System Administration, and/or the District Library Center.
- A library that is closed for more than two (2) workdays in a row, and three (3) or more workdays per week can negatively affect its local community.

- Example - Closing the library between the Christmas holiday and the New Year holiday is not a best practice as it could negatively affect:
 - people experiencing homelessness who do not have a warming shelter nearby.
 - people looking for employment that do not have access to the internet.
 - people needing social services that do not have access to the internet.
 - children/teens at home due to school break.

E. Expected Outcomes

- Provide awareness to the community of when the library's schedule changes.
- Allow for proper staff scheduling and program scheduling.
- Provide clarity and allow flexibility for a library to schedule closures.
- Allow coordination of services from the system and/or district.

F. Closings for which the Office of Commonwealth Libraries should be notified (notification should be submitted as soon as possible)

- Natural emergencies in which the library will be closed for three or more consecutive days. e.g., storm damage.
- Building repairs, upgrades, and construction lasting three or more consecutive days.
- Emergency staffing situations of three or more consecutive days.

G. Closing for which notifying the Office of Commonwealth Libraries is not necessary

- Commonwealth of Pennsylvania or national emergencies
- Any federal or Commonwealth of Pennsylvania observed holidays:
 - A calendar can be found on the U.S. Office of Personnel management's [federal holidays website](#).
 - PA Unconsolidated Statutes: Legal Holiday Law P.L. 188, No. 138 Cl. 38
- When Christmas and New Year's Day fall on a Saturday or Sunday AND the library is regularly open seven days per week, the library may close for three days in a row
- Holidays are in addition to the ten-week seasonal reduction in hours permitted each year
- One in-service day (may be split)
- Natural emergencies of up to two days, e.g., snowstorms
- Emergency staffing situations of up to two days