Southern Adirondack Library System
Free Direct Access (90.3)
2022-2026

Introduction

The Southern Adirondack Library System (SALS) serves the counties of Hamilton, Saratoga, Warren and Washington Counties. It has a service population of 310,962 in a geographic area of 4,238 square miles. There are thirty-four member libraries and one branch that are part of SALS, a cooperative library system. Every member library makes resources available to the residents of the four counties. These resources are available through on-site use and through direct access in accordance with the New York State Commissioner of Education's Regulations 90.3.

CR 90.3.(a) Definitions

Public Library System means a library established by one or more counties, a group of libraries serving an area including one of more counties in whole or in part, a library of a city containing one or more counties, or a cooperative library system established pursuant to the provisions of section 255 of the Education Law.

Approved plan of service means a plan of library service submitted by a public library system board of trustees in accordance with section 272 of the Education Law that has been approved by the Commissioner pursuant to the provisions of this section. The plan of service defines the mutual commitments, responsibilities and obligations of the public library system and its members in meeting the service needs of the area served and statewide library service goals.

Direct Access means the ability of an individual, who resides within the boundaries of a public library system and who has a valid borrower's card issued by the system or any member library in the system, to borrow

materials for home use directly from the premises of any library that is a member of the public library system on the same basis as that specified for cardholders in each individual library.

Chartered service area means the geographic area served by a library as stated in charter documents as approved by the Board of Regents and on file with the department. For purposes of this section, the phrase “and its environs” or its equivalent, as contained in any charter document will not be recognized by the commissioner as a valid part of the library’s chartered service area.

For purposes of this section, the commissioner will not recognize areas served by the library under contract as a valid part of a library’s chartered service area.

Resident borrower means an individual who resides within the boundaries of the chartered service area of a public or association or Indian library as defined in section 253 of the Education Law and who is a library cardholder at that library.

Non-resident borrower means an individual who resides outside the boundaries of the chartered service area of a public or association or Indian library as defined in section 253 of the Education Law and who is a library cardholder at that library or at another member library of the public library system who is a system cardholder.

Library resources mean the print and non-print materials owned by the library and any other services provided by the library to the resident borrowers of the library’s chartered service area.

Local income means funds supplied by local taxing agencies which may be municipalities, school districts or special districts. These funds may be from the library’s sponsoring municipality or from a non-sponsoring municipality in payment for library services.

On-site use means the ability of an individual to use library resources on the premises of a library.

Serious inequities and hardships mean those conditions which adversely affect resident borrowers or member libraries. Such conditions are defined in accordance with the free direct access provisions contained in each system's approved plan of service and may include, but are not limited to, a definition of what constitutes excessive borrowing of a library's resources by non-resident borrowers.

Unserved means those individuals residing in geographic areas that are within the boundaries of a public library system but outside the boundaries of chartered service area of a library which is a member of that system.

Underserved means those individuals residing in geographic areas that are within the chartered service area of a member library and which the public library system had identified as having an inadequate level of local income to support the delivery of acceptable library services.

The Plan

1. Describe how all individuals residing within the boundaries of the system but outside a member library's chartered service area will receive library services.

Individuals residing within the boundaries of the system (SALS) but outside a member library's chartered to serve area will receive library services via:

- Free direct and onsite access at any member library
- Central Library Services provided by the Crandall Public Library
- Through the SALS website and online catalog
- System-wide library card
- Member libraries meeting criteria described elsewhere in this Plan may restrict direct access as permitted under CR 90.3

2. Describe how the system will assure that those persons living within the system boundaries in an area where a member library chooses to withdraw from the system, will be served by the system.

See answer to question 1.

3. Describe what the system considers "serious inequities and hardships" and the criteria used by the system to make the determination.

SALS considers “serious inequities and hardships” to be when the circulation of materials to non-resident borrowers is excessive and significantly deprives local residents the borrowing of materials in a reasonable time period.

4. Describe what constitutes excessive out-of-chartered service area borrowing in the system.

Excessive out-of-chartered service area borrowing occurs in a member library when:
20% of total materials circulated from the collection of a member library are to residents outside a library’s chartered service area.

And/or
10% of total materials circulated from the collection of a member library are residents of a single community outside a library’s chartered to serve area.

And/or

An unserved community has a population over 10,000 and no fair and equitable contract for library services.

5. a. Describe the unserved and underserved populations within the system.

Currently, there are 46,289 unserved (NY State Education Department) people residing in the system service area. The unserved areas may be seen on the Division of Library Development’s website http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/libs/service-area-maps/system-and-county-maps/southern-adirondack.pdf

b. Describe the criteria used by the system to identify libraries having an inadequate level of local income to support delivery of acceptable library services (underserved). List those libraries so identified.

The average per capita support for libraries in the Southern Adirondack Library System is $56.89. The median per capita support for libraries in the Southern Adirondack Library System is $31.37. Sixteen libraries receive less than $31.37 per capita in local funds.

6. Describe the actions the system will take to expand the availability of library services to the unserved and underserved individuals residing within the boundaries of the system.

The system will provide consulting and continuing education opportunities to help member library staff and trustees gain the skills needed to solicit additional funding from their municipalities, and to make informed decisions when considering becoming self-taxing districts. System staff and trustees will continue to work with member library staff and trustees to advocate for adequate local, state and federal funding levels necessary to provide library services in our region.

7. Provide a timeline for such activities.

These activities are ongoing.

8. Identify who will be responsible for carry out these actions

System and member library staff and trustees will be responsible for carrying out these actions.

9. Describe the conditions under which such modifications to the free direct access plan can be made:
a. Without prior approval of the Commissioner of Education on the recommendation of the SALS Board of Trustees and after approval of a majority of the member libraries of this plan and after approval of that plan by the Commissioner:

When a library can document to the satisfaction of the system that 20% of total materials circulated from the collection of a member library are to residents of communities outside a library's charter to serve area.

And/or

When a library can document that an unserved community has a population over 10,000 and has no fair and equitable contract for library services that library may restrict the following materials:
Nonprint materials and equipment
Printed materials that are less than one year old from acquisition date (fiction, nonfiction books and periodicals)

Attendance at library programs may be restricted to local residents first.

These restricted programs and materials must be supported entirely from local funds.

If a single unserved community is over 10,000, and a library proves hardship, the library may choose to restrict all but on-site use of library materials.

A library choosing to restrict must notify the system in writing. The system will immediately notify the other libraries of such restrictions.

b. With prior approval of the Commissioner of Education

A library may request a waiver for restrictions beyond those mentioned in the plan if a majority of the other member libraries agree to support such a waiver. This appeal will be in writing and include the following:

1. Documentation of the serious inequities and hardships affecting the resident borrowers of the member library making the request.
2. The proposed modifications to unrestricted direct access that will be implemented and a description of the anticipated impact on resident and non-resident borrowers.
3. Recommendations for remedying the underlying inequity with a proposed timetable for action.

10. Describe how the system will assure that member libraries are complying with the system free direct access plan approved by a majority of member libraries.

Annual review of members regarding compliance and review of the monthly borrower reports generated by the system-wide integrated library system.

11. Describe how the system obtained member library input to the plan for free direct access.

This revision was shared and approved by the:

SALS Board of Trustees pending September 2021 Board Meeting

Member Library Directors March 2021