

Mid-Hudson Library System

Free Direct Access Plan

The following plan describes how the Mid-Hudson Library System and its member libraries will insure free direct access for all people in the MHLS service area and what steps will be taken should overuse arise.

Free Direct Access, Commissioner's Regulations §90.3, permits the holder of a valid library card issued by a public or association library or public library system to borrow on site, free of charge, materials from any member library within that system.

The Mid-Hudson Library System encompasses five counties, Columbia, Dutchess, Greene, Putnam and Ulster with sixty-six public libraries, and four branches. The population of the system is 627,042. Approximately 40,226 live in unserved areas, but there is no one jurisdiction of 10,000 or more people not being served.

1. *How will the system assure that all persons living within the system boundaries be served?*

Any person living within the system boundaries is eligible for a library card which is accepted at every library in the system. Cardholders are entitled to borrow materials from any member library they wish to visit. In addition, the patron placed holds system allows a patron to request an item from any library in the system and have it delivered to the library of their choice.

To obtain a card, a person needs to go to his or her home library, i.e. the library in whose service area he or she resides. Many libraries have made arrangements to register patrons from other libraries without making them go to their home library to receive a card. For patrons in unserved areas, their nearest library will register them for a card.

2. *How will the system serve residents of a library that withdraws from the system?*

If a library withdraws from the system, a neighboring library will be designated to provide library cards for those residents as if they lived in an unserved area. The system will also assist in rechartering that area for a member library.

3. *Describe what constitutes serious inequities and hardship" and the criteria used by the system to make the determination.*

Serious inequities and hardships are defined as when a library has found that the patrons of its service area are unable to use the services of the library due patrons from other areas overuse or from a practice one library has instituted which causes a burden on another library. This could occur when:

- 20% of its onsite circulation is from a library that is below the threshold (see section 5b) funding level as described in section 5. or
- 40% of patrons using the library as a pick up location are from another single library.

If a library suspects this to be the case, the director will request the System to create a report to verify the actual percentage of usage.

4. *Describe what constitutes excessive out of chartered service area borrowing.*

Excessive out-of-chartered service area borrowing is defined as when 10% of an onsite library's circulation is from people in an unserved area, or 25% of holds to be picked up at the library are from people from an unserved area.

5. a) *Describe the unserved and the underserved populations of the system.*

According to the 2000 census figures, Mid-Hudson Library System has a population of 620,042 people. Of these 40,226 live in unserved areas. There are currently eleven towns that do not contribute to library services. The other areas are towns where school district boundaries have divided the town into areas of non-support.

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

In light of national per capita average of \$35, New York State per capita average of \$27. For the purpose of this plan, we can only address the poorest members. Any library with a per capita income less than the minimum New York State Regents Commission recommendation of \$20.00 per capita or total receipts less than \$100,000 will be considered for this part and for part 3 below the threshold level of funding. This figure is used as an initial indicator. We then must consider other factors such as: chartered service areas are not actual service areas, some libraries receive in-kind services such space, utilities and others, or the difference in cost of living rates across the system area.

c) *Describe what actions the system will take to expand the availability of library services to the unserved and underserved individual residing within the boundaries of the system.*

The Mid-Hudson Library System will take a proactive approach to increasing per capita funding to a sufficient level.

- Information on increasing local funds through School Ballot Initiatives (chapter 259), chapter 414 and special district has been and will continue to be disseminated to libraries.
- Re-chartering will be examined as an option for improving funding. During the last five years, seven libraries have rechartered to include previously unserved areas.
- A portion of the system's formal continuing education program for member boards will focus on increasing funding.
- Libraries who fall below the funding threshold will be targeted for information and assistance in planning for increased funds as described in the Mid-Hudson Library System Plan of Service. Both MHLS staff and Board members will take an active role in working with the member library's board and staff to increase funding to an adequate level. Since 2000, this plan has resulted in MHLS libraries having increased their funding by 57% or over \$7.5 million dollars..

d) Provide timetable for such actions

As part of the Mid-Hudson Library System Plan of Service, library funding is addressed in working with libraries to bring their budgets to a vote through consultations and budget vote support. Currently fifty out of sixty-six libraries have their budget voted on and in the next three years we expect ten more libraries to follow suit.

e) Identify who will be responsible

The member library retains the primary responsibility for adequate funding. The Mid-Hudson Library System Board and staff will take the lead and work with member library directors and library trustees as set forth in section 5c.

6. *Describe the conditions under which modifications to free direct access plan can be made.*

a) Without prior approval of the commissioner

If the system investigation finds a library is being over used under the conditions set forward in sections 3 or 4 of this plan, that library may request that the following restrictions be placed on borrowing:

- Refusal to lend material less than a year old
- Refusal to lend non-print, e.g. video, music CDs, books on tape
- Refusal to allow attendance at programs.

Libraries need to monitor the date of purchase to implement this section.

b) With prior approval of the commissioner.

If a library has made two attempts to convince a town board from an unserved area to adequately support the library and both have failed, or if a library can show that another library's failed attempt to increase funding is resulting in overuse, the library can request denial of services as listed in 6a. This request must be made to the System who will confirm the existence of this condition. The member libraries will then vote on the request. If receiving a 51% majority of member boards approval, the President of the Mid-Hudson Library System Board of Trustees will write a letter to the Commissioner of Education requesting approval for denial of services listed.

7. *Describe how the system will assure that member libraries are complying with the system free direct access plan.*

Reports on library patron usage will be generated as needed based on the statistical category for town. If statistical or anecdotal information indicates a library is not complying with this plan, the System's Executive Director, or designee, will meet with the library's Board of Trustees to require corrective action. If the situation is not corrected, the system will withhold library LLSA funds and other system grant funds, e.g. mileage and phone reimbursement and continuing education support from that library. In extreme cases,

libraries will be removed from the list of pick-up locations as per the Resource Sharing Standards Policy. (see attached).

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

The Mid-Hudson Library System's Board of Trustees asked the Directors Association to develop this plan. The plan was developed and reviewed by the Resource Sharing Committee of the Directors Association, voted on by the Directors Association and voted on the by the Mid Hudson Library System Board of Trustees.

9. *Appeals*

If a library wishes to appeal a ruling under section 7, they can request reconsideration by writing to a MHLS trustee from their county. The matter will be reviewed by the MHLS Board of Trustees in its next regularly scheduled meeting and a determination given.

10. *Amendment*

A member library, Directors Association, or the System may submit an amendment to the MHLS Board of Trustees. The amendment must be approved by the Directors Association and the MHLS board to be passed.