

Library Cards for Underserved and Unserved Minors (i.e. Cards for Kids Act, Student Success Cards)

FAQ/Best Practices

A library's local Board adoption of the Non-Resident Fee card program (Sec. 30-55.60 of [Public Act 101-0632](#)) prohibits a library offering non-resident library cards from charging fees for such cards to any student in an unincorporated area in Illinois whose household falls at or below the [U.S. Department of Agriculture's Income Eligibility Guidelines](#).

Please note: Use of libraries by nonresidents is not a mandate. Libraries may adopt this on the local level.

The Cards for Kids Act component, approved by Governor Pritzker on 6/5/2020, can be found in (4) below:

(75 ILCS 16/30-55.60)

Sec. 30-55.60. Use of library by nonresidents. The board may extend the privileges and use of the library, including the borrowing of materials on an individual basis by persons residing outside the district. If the board exercises this power, the privilege of library use shall be upon terms and conditions prescribed by the board in its regulations. The board shall charge a nonresident fee for the privileges and use of the library at least equal to the cost paid by residents of the district, with the cost to be determined according to the formula established by the Illinois State Library. A person residing outside of a public library service area must apply for a non-resident library card at the public library closest to the person's principal residence. The nonresident cards shall allow for borrowing privileges at all participating public libraries in the regional library system. The nonresident fee shall not apply to any of the following:

- (1) Privileges and use provided (i) under the terms of the district's membership in a library system operating under the provisions of the Illinois Library System Act or (ii) under the terms of any reciprocal agreement with a public or private corporation or entity providing a library service.
- (2) Residents of an area in which the library is conducting a program for the purpose of encouraging the inclusion of the area in the library district.
- (3) A nonresident who, as an individual or as a partner, principal stockholder, or other joint owner, owns or leases property that is taxed for library service or is a senior administrative officer of a firm, business, or other corporation owning taxable property within the district, upon presentation of the most recent tax bill upon that taxable property or a copy of the commercial lease of that taxable property.
- (4) A nonresident in an unincorporated area in Illinois who is a student whose household falls at or below the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Income Eligibility Guidelines.

(Source: P.A. 100-875, eff. 8-14-18; 101-632, eff. 6-5-20.)

Initial research shows that while 48.5% of Illinois students fall within the free and reduced lunch program eligibility guidelines, approximately 3.8% of said students (@75,000 students in all) also reside in unincorporated/unserved areas. This law was put into effect specifically to provide access to this group of students.

The Administrative Code rules which govern this law, and all changes to the [2020 Illinois Register](#), are currently under review, with a public comment period which was open from 11/30/2020 through 1/15/2021, with all Illinois member libraries.

As per Greg McCormick at Illinois State Library:

- School districts that span multiple library districts/service areas can request to have all cards issued through one library district/service area. This is currently under review, and it is anticipated that Illinois' regional library systems will work out guidelines for libraries who share school districts.
- This program is applicable to grades Pre-K through 12th grade.
- Unsheltered (ie. migrant, transitory, homeless, etc.) populations are under consideration.
- This program does not apply to homeschool students.

I'm interested in implementing the Cards for Kids Act portion of the Non-Resident Fee Card program! How do I begin?

The Cards for Kids Act is included within the Non Resident Library Card legislation, which is reviewed and/or approved by individual Boards of libraries.

Each individual library which selects to adopt the Non-Resident Library Card initiative also adopts the Cards for Kids Act.

As such, you may want to revise your Circulation Policy to reflect the changes in issuing library cards to students or youth, and/or the removal of the Non Resident Library Card option, when you bring this before your library Board for review.

How do I estimate what percentage of students are eligible for the Cards for Kids Act on a school by school basis?

Unfortunately, there is no known way to determine the exact number of students who are both unserved and eligible for reduced and free lunch, since the names and addresses of those who are eligible for reduced and free lunch programs are not shared. Additionally, Township governments often do not collect data in the same manner as other taxing bodies.

That said, try these steps:

- Locate the Low Income Student population in published public school district statistics, as found in the [Illinois Report Card](#).
- If you have a large unserved area, consider requesting a list of unique addresses (including city and zip code) from the local County Clerk's office, or another agency which collects data and/or can create custom GIS data reports such as this.
 - Request that they additionally limit the data set to include only the residents of your library's taxing area, if possible.
- Contact the school district or school in question (with whom you ideally would have already initiated discussion on a partnership) to request a list of student addresses and number of students at each address, to compare against the list of served residents of your library or library district.
 - NOTE: It may be that the school will not issue this without a co-signed MOU/MOA or IGA in place.
- Remove the duplicate addresses on the student list and the GIS data list in order to retain only the unique addresses of students who are unserved.
- Using the Illinois Report Card data, calculate the percentage of the student population that does not qualify for reduced and free lunch programs.
- Multiply the number of students/addresses remaining on your spreadsheet (ie. addresses that are unserved) by the percentage of the student population that are not reduced and free lunch students.
- Your total of students will fall somewhere within this percentage and the total number of addresses of unserved students remaining on your spreadsheet.

What are my options for ensuring that universal service can be provided to the students and educators of the schools physically residing in my service area, and/or the schools residing outside of my service area but which serve students in my service area?

- School districts/schools can cover the cost for students who do not qualify for free/reduced lunch programs with their annual budgets and/or federal funds.
 - You can either use the General Mathematical Formula, the Tax Bill Method, the general Average method, or another method which can fairly assess the cost for the students in a household. As these cards are issued to students and not households, it may be wise to consider charging for a portion of the cost of the household, based on the average number of people per household in your service area.
- Account for the total amount of cards issued to unserved students who do not qualify for reduced and free lunch programs after one year, and outline a reciprocal arrangement that the school can provide which is equal to the value of cards issued

and of benefit to your tax payers. This can include the library's use of a school's marketing resources, physical spaces, enhanced partnerships on initiatives where in kind costs are handled by the school district, etc.

- If the service area includes students who reside in other library services areas, work with your neighboring libraries to develop a joint IGA, outlining costs that would be of benefit to each public library service area.

My Board has approved the Non-Resident Fee Card legislation. How should I proceed on next steps for the Cards for Kids Act?

You will want to determine whether it is efficient and appropriate to work with individual principals/schools, or whether you wish to offer the service to the entire school district. In doing so, consider whether/which individual schools in a school district largely serve students in your library's service area.

For schools which serve students who live in more than one library service area, consider offering a joint program - and ideally, an identical one from the perspective of the educators, parents/guardians and students - with neighboring libraries.

Determine with your Board whether a Memorandum of Understanding/Memorandum of Agreement template, or an [Intergovernmental Agreement](#) template, is preferred.

Create this draft, and send it, along with the basics of the Cards for Kids Act, to your local School Administrator(s) and/or your School Library Media Specialist(s)/Literacy Specialist(s).

It will be helpful to know in advance what the percentage of reduced/free lunch students are, and how you will propose providing universal access to the remaining students who do not qualify for the reduced/free lunch program, but who remain unserved. [Funding discussions](#) will come into play in these scenarios, and you will want to be prepared.

Do I need to involve other libraries in this process?

It is recommended to inform your area libraries of your local library's adoption of this new Law if the school or school district boundaries do not match those of the library service boundaries.

Additionally, due to reciprocal borrowing, it is courteous to inform your neighboring libraries if you anticipate your issuance of library cards will increase their service capacity.

Your neighboring libraries may already be issuing Educator/Teacher cards or student library cards within the schools which you are considering serving with a MOU/MOA or IGA. In this event, it will be helpful to determine with your neighboring library whether having aligned services/ promotions is preferable, and what may need to adjust for future school years.

The public facing application process for educators, parents/guardians and students will ideally be seamless and similar/identical regardless of which library service area covers the student in question. As such, a unified process involving personnel from all libraries and the school district is preferable.

What kind of marketing pieces are helpful?

Consider developing a web page to include information about the Cards for Kids Act or the specifics of your initiative, and to include (if your library offers this option) a web form for online library card registration, with one form offered in each language spoken by your service population.

Google Forms are helpful for coordinating these submissions, as the entries can then be exported to a Google Sheet, which can then be shared with your relevant staff for library card processing.

It will be essential to have established points of contacts and roles in your library for this new service. Consider involving your leads in Circulation, Youth Services and/or Outreach, Communications and Administration. Please keep in mind that student data will need to be kept as private as possible, so consider sharing school data sets with as few staff members as is needed to ensure that library cards are issued correctly, and that students who do not qualify due to being unserved and not qualifying for reduced/free lunch are accounted for and/or denied service.

It is important that your library control as much of the initial messaging as possible regarding the process, particularly as the library is reliant upon the school district for direct communication to parents, guardians and educators.

Consider developing a flyer or online graphic that can be shared between your Administrative team and the School District's contacts, for joint press releases and/or communication to parents, guardians and educators.

Also consider developing an educational brochure to distribute with your student library cards (whether issued in person or by mail), as well as a secondary brochure for educators, if you choose to include Educator Library cards as part of the MOU/IGA process. It will be necessary to showcase the value of a library card if you are issuing these based on online applications and, therefore, unable to interact with the applicant in person.

A joint press release and coordinated social media blasts/email blasts, including quotes from library and school personnel, is also preferable.

If you are working with more than one library due to the service area of the student population, it is strongly recommended to provide access to your partnering library's information on your website, and vice versa, and to develop a method for forwarding library card applications which come to the "incorrect" library, so that no application is lost or ignored.

How can I verify whether a student is participating in the reduced or free lunch program?

Each family is provided with a piece of documentation that you can ask to be provided in person or virtually. Please see this [form](#) for how eligibility is granted.

If a parent or guardian is completing an online form, you can also include a question which asks them if their household qualifies for the reduced and free lunch program - and, simply take their word for it!

How do I ensure the privacy of minors is not violated as we request student data?

In order to acquire a data set, anticipate that the schools will require a Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ([FERPA](#)) confidentiality clause in your MOU/MOA or IGA, specifically limiting which data will be shared.

Consider what data points your Circulation team needs in order to verify a minor is a student of the school district with which you have an existing MOU/MOA or IGA.

You do not need the name of the minor in order to successfully identify whether the applicant is a student of a school with which you have a partnership. You can easily pair an applicant's address against a data set provided by the school by simply requesting the school provide you with a complete list of unique address, city, state and zip code combinations of each student.

Consider asking for the name of the parent/guardian affiliated with each address, as well, but this is not essential.

Should library cards for students be opt-in and applied for by parents and guardians, or should we create library cards and issue them to students whose parents/guardians have not requested them?

Ideally, library card signup would be part of the student registration process and would not, therefore, need to be either/or. It is recommended that you request this be part of the process by building it into your MOU/MOA or IGA, at the earliest possible opportunity.

It is always recommended to get the permission of parents and guardians for any permissions which can create liability or financial responsibility, and as library cards can be used to access content that is not intended for minors.

Additionally, some unique waivers/permissions may need to be specifically granted by adults (ie. unfiltered computer service, access to Digital Media services, access to equipment checkout, etc.).

When creating cards for students whose parents/guardians have not specifically requested or authorized this service, it will also be important to analyze your resources for cost/benefit. Many cards which are not requested may go unused, or may be handled carelessly.

If issuing library cards to all students, the data set you will request from the school will need to include all required information needed for an initial library card template, such as name, address, telephone, guardian's email, birthdate of student, parent/guardian name, school name, student's grade, computer usage permission, and other such information.