

Free Direct Access Plan Background Information

Prepared for the June 12, 2013 Pioneer Library System Board of Trustees Meeting by Betsy Morris

Commissioner's Regulation 90.3 requires the every public library system have a System Free Direct Access Plan, which is Element 12 in the Public Library System Plan of Service. The provisions of the Free Direct Access regulations are designed to assure all New Yorkers have access to library services, whether they reside within or outside of a library chartered service area. It allows certain restrictions to be placed on non-residents, should their use of local library services, without adequate compensatory funding, adversely affect access to those services by resident users. The regulations also address on-site use and underserved libraries—those without adequate financial support.

Pioneer's plan was last revised in 1999, and has remained in place since that time. Changes in the economic landscape warrant the drafting of a revised plan. In describing how all individuals in the system geographic area received library services, the earlier plan states: *each of the four county governments (Livingston, Ontario, Wayne and Wyoming) contribute funding to the public libraries in that county to compensate them for non-resident use.* This is no longer the case--Wyoming County has eliminated county support for public libraries, Ontario and Wayne are reducing support, only Livingston has increased its support. Additionally, the impact of the tax cap on municipal governments has forced many municipalities to decrease public library funding. As library budgets decline, the Free Direct Access Plan is one tool local libraries can use to leverage support from non-resident communities. It allows for the possibility of restrictions on services to non-residents, which can translate into public pressure to create better contractual agreements with unserved communities.

From the regulations, *Free 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 ... 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 [residents borrowers] in each individual library.*

For those residing outside of a local library chartered service area, it can be interpreted as:

