

Ensuring that Hoosier foster children have access to a library card



Our Hoosier foster children **deserve access** to a library card.

At the peak of the opioid crisis in 2017, there were more than 17,000 Indiana children in foster care. Many family reunification visits are arranged in public libraries, when service providers contracted by the Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) facilitate and observe meetings between foster children and their family members. These reunification visits create an opportunity to introduce the families to all the resources available to them at Indiana's public libraries.

What is the issue?

Children in foster care may be visiting libraries where the child does not have access to a library card. Current law restricts access and is unclear for guardians of foster children. The child may be visiting in the library of the suspended custodial biological parent, the non-custodial parent, the foster parent, a group home, or the area of the court or DCS contracted provider.

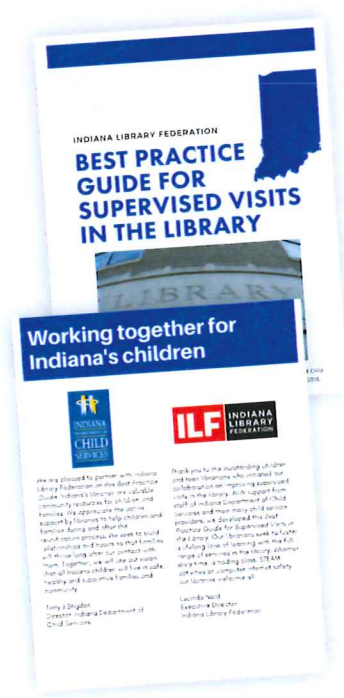
What is Indiana Library Federation's position?

Indiana Library Federation (ILF) seeks to ensure library card access for foster children by proposing the addition of *children receiving foster care services* to the list of exceptions allowed for public libraries to provide library cards. This exception would be added to IC 36-12-2-25(e).

What is the potential impact?

Having a library card is like having a ticket to exploring the world through information, technology and other resources. These early experiences with the library have the potential to create a lifelong love of learning in the foster child through use of the full range of library services:

- Checking out books, eBooks, audiobooks, games and music
- Using computers and technology
- Borrowing through Inter-library loans
- Reserving a study room
- Registering for library classes, such as computer coding, music, arts and crafts, STEM, space exploration and more
- Logging in to certain databases critical for research



How libraries currently serve children in foster care

Many public libraries have responded to the crisis in foster care. To improve the thousands of family reunification meetings, Indiana Library Federation collaborated with Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) to develop the *Best Practice Guide for Supervised Visits in the Library*.

Here are a few examples from around the state:

- Adams County Library System and Greenwood Public Library developed Supervised Visitation Guides to help families spend time at the library interacting, learning and playing together.
- Libraries in Noble County meet regularly with DCS and its contractors to coordinate efforts.
- Noble County Public Library provides a private space for families to interact after they enjoy library services.
- Several public libraries offer food friendly areas so that families may share a meal together.

Library card access in Indiana

Most Indiana residents live in a library district and over 3.3 million Hoosiers are library borrowers. About 400,000 residents of 36 counties live in a geographic area not served by a public library. State law allows non-residents to pay for a nonresident card or for a PLAC (Public Library Access Card). Nearly 30,000 students gain access through a special exception for student non-residents, and 4,343 school employees take advantage of a special exception for them.

Many public libraries have developed partnerships with schools to provide e-card access of digital resources for students, educational supports, and regular deliveries of print materials.

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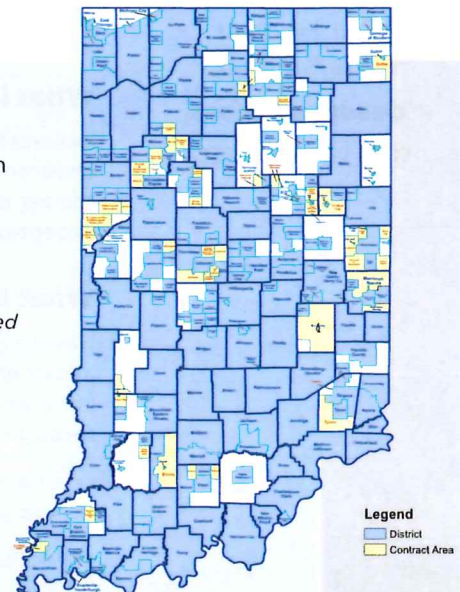
Indiana Library Federation believes that libraries, with all of their modern amenities and innovations, are a smart investment, with the potential to transform communities and create a passion for lifelong learning.

Our approach to advocacy

- Indiana Library Federation is a statewide nonprofit association that is dedicated to advancing library services for the benefit of Indiana residents.
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Indiana's public libraries by the numbers*

236 public libraries **426** library branches **25** bookmobiles
85,016 children's programs **2,186,889** children's program attendance
13,474 young adult programs **149,778** total programs
3,280,838 total program attendance **30,836,051** total library visits per year



Reinforcing safety at public libraries with criminal history check policies



Limited criminal history checks may omit important information due to different names, spellings, etc.

Libraries and many public-serving organizations conduct criminal history checks for employees. Some libraries run checks on all employees, while other libraries require checks for employees and volunteers who have regular and ongoing, unsupervised contact with children, or for employees who have access to money. Some libraries only run limited, local checks for employees.

What are the issues?

The types of criminal history checks vary, from simple, local name lookup to a more comprehensive review against multiple databases across the country. The cost of criminal history checks, ranging from \$15 to \$50 per person, increases the cost of library services. Indiana's Public Libraries employ more than 4,400 employees and maintain various numbers of volunteers.

Most libraries use discretion in balancing safety with fair chance hiring practices (more on page 2). As public spaces, libraries are not permitted to discriminate against former offenders without cause and specific library board action.

What is Indiana Library Federation's position?

Indiana Library Federation (ILF) supports adding public libraries to the list of eligible entities to utilize the Indiana State Police for criminal history checks and requiring that public libraries develop and maintain a criminal history check policy by December 31, 2020.

What is the potential impact?

Allowing public libraries to use the Indiana State Police for criminal history checks will help ensure the integrity of the criminal check process by providing the more thorough review. Requiring library boards to adopt a formal policy for criminal history checks will help ensure that the policy reflects the community's needs and is reviewed on a regular basis.

Federal criminal history checks require finger printing for most thorough history checks across the U.S. and are also the most costly to organizations.

Expanded limited history checks run by Indiana State Police (ISP) check against multiple database checks, as well as other states and the IN Department of Child Services for substantiated cases of abuse or neglect in the case of Indiana K-12 schools.

Limited criminal history checks run by local law enforcement provide a basic name search, which may omit important information due to different names, spellings, etc.

About criminal history check practices

Many public libraries require criminal history checks for staff relative to the type of job. Most require checks for staff and regular volunteers whose scope of service involves children. Libraries most often use local law enforcement, contracted services, or their payroll companies to complete the check.

Many library staff work at multiple libraries and/or make regular visits to schools, child care centers, or other organizations that also require criminal history checks. Criminal history check information is restricted from being shared among organizations. Like schools, public libraries serve children; however, unlike schools, public libraries are not subject to the doctrine of *in loco parentis*. At the public library, parents are responsible for their children while participating in library services and programs.

Fair Chance Hiring and safety in libraries

Fair Chance Hiring policies aim to give people with minor, nonviolent, and offenses from youthful indiscretions, a second chance to meet the workforce needs of Indiana. To that end, Governor Holcomb issued Executive Order 17-15 in part to help those with a criminal record rejoin the workforce.

Some libraries partner with community corrections for former offenders to complete landscaping and facility-related tasks. This collaboration provides residents valuable work experience and stewards taxpayer funds. As a best practice in human resources administration, library policies allow discretion related to the type and date of offense specific to the type of job responsibilities.



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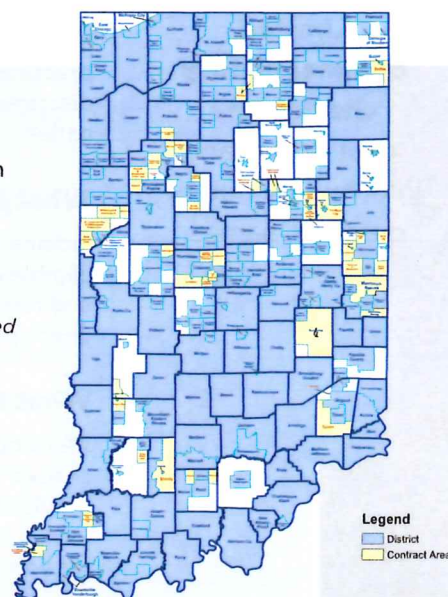
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INDIANA
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INDIANA LIBRARY FEDERATION'S POSITION 2020

Ensuring every student has access to an effective school library program



The funding requirement for \$8 per student per year for school library materials has not increased since 1989, while the cost of print and digital resources has more than doubled.

The academic success of students corresponds with the presence of an effective school library program, led by a certified librarian. The school library supports all learners. School libraries have changed with technology integration. Qualified school librarians teach students to navigate information and collaborate with fellow teachers in integrating print and digital resources into classroom and e-learning instruction.

What are the issues?

Indiana's K-12 schools operating without a certified school librarian on staff and without adequate funding to purchase and maintain school library materials are creating barriers for students. Employers and policymakers expect K-12 schools to ensure Hoosier children have the 21st century skills to succeed in college, career, and life. Yet, schools struggle to meet requirements for library staffing and materials as required in the Indiana Administrative Code (511 IAC 6.1-5-6).

Half of Hoosier students have no certified school librarian at their school. This professional void is most often found at the elementary level, a critical time for students learning to read, using print and digital resources, and navigating the Internet.

What is Indiana Library Federation's position?

Indiana Library Federation (ILF) advocates for schools to develop and maintain effective school library programs with qualified teacher librarians supported by library assistant paraprofessionals. ILF advocates for \$2 million from the state budget to be distributed to schools to support an increase of \$2 per student per year specifically for school library materials.

What is the potential impact?

A modern school library is a bustling learning commons where project-based learning takes place, and print and digital resources are a part of a student's routine. At all grade levels, students develop reading fluency and empathy for others through quality print and electronic resources. Students will have the skills to navigate the rapidly changing world around them through research, problem-solving, and media literacy. Access to library materials bridges the achievement gap, most significantly for children of color and children in poverty.

1/2 of Indiana students
have no certified
teacher librarian
in their school.

What is a school librarian and what do they do?

A school librarian, also called a media specialist, is a licensed teacher who has qualified to add school librarian certification to their teaching license.

Most Indiana school librarians hold a Master of Library and Information Science, which includes graduate courses in information and data systems, library management, ethics, and ways to measure learning growth in information literacy.

Within a school, teacher librarians often assume leadership responsibilities in the areas of instructional design, technology integration, distance learning, testing support, instructional coaching, co-teaching, support for E-Learning days, and support for high-need and high-ability students.

Restoring school library services during a teacher librarian shortage

Indiana is facing a teacher librarian shortage much like other specialty areas of STEM and special education teachers. The lack of qualified librarians jeopardizes the effectiveness of school libraries, but there are signs of promise. A number of school districts recently restored certified school library positions. Some schools with declining enrollments have blended responsibilities of school librarian and instructional coach. Highly effective teachers are recruited to study and test into school library certification. IUPUI's School of Informatics and Computing launched a 16-credit graduate program for school librarians who may not have resources to complete the entire master's degree in library and information science.

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Indiana's K-12 schools by the numbers*

1,135,194 students enrolled in 2019-2020

Income eligibility: **40%** free lunch **7%** reduced-price

Ethnicity: **67%** White **13%** Hispanic **12%** Black **5%** Multi-racial **3%** Asian

1:1 device adoption: **83%** districts





Increasing transparency and understanding in public library finances

Unintended consequences of legislation passed in 2019

HEA1343 includes language that confuses the fiscal body that established a library with the fiscal body that adopts budgets.

HEA1343 created a confusing threshold calculation unlike any used for other units of government. For example, HEA1777 applies to townships "if the total amount of funds in a township's capital improvement funds exceeds: (1) 150% of the township's total annual budget estimate; and (2) \$200,000." In contrast, HEA1343 applies if "cash on hand plus its anticipated revenues is greater than 150% of the public library's budget."

HEA1343 allows a fiscal body to continue binding authority after the criteria no longer applies.

The Indiana General Assembly established the system used by libraries and other government units for budgets, tax levy and reserves. Public Libraries follow the law and guidance provided by the Department of Local Government Finance (DLGF) and State Board of Accounts (SBOA). Guidance includes provisions for reserves for maintenance, emergencies, and capital improvements. Rainy Day and Library Improvement Reserve Funds (LIRF) are critical to libraries' fiscal stewardship of taxpayer funds and taxpayer-owned assets.

What are the issues?

Legislation passed in the 2019 session intended to create a public transparency process for library reserves and unintentionally created more confusion for fiscal bodies, taxpayers and libraries. See sidebar for details.

What is Indiana Library Federation's position?

Indiana Library Federation (ILF) advocates for transparency in budgeting and that libraries should maintain responsible reserves to protect taxpayer assets. ILF supports legislation that clarifies language of HEA1343 from the 2019 session so that fiscal bodies, taxpayers, and libraries understand and may implement the law. ILF seeks to clarify the fiscal body, the 150% cash over budget calculation, and the period the threshold criteria is applied. **Specific proposed changes include:**

- *The budget-adopting fiscal body, rather than the fiscal body that established the library, would be the fiscal body with option to invoke binding review if certain criteria are met.*
- *The 150% threshold is calculated based on the cash balance (as reflected in the December 31 report to the State Board of Accounts on the Annual Financial Report) as a percentage of certified budget for tax dollars for the ensuing year.*
- *Binding review, if invoked, would only remain in effect for the period where the cash balance as a percentage of budget exceeds 150%.*

What is the potential impact?

Conversations between libraries and fiscal bodies about reserves help policymakers and taxpayers understand the care libraries take to steward taxpayer funds and assets. When taxpayers pay for the building, they expect that the building will be maintained appropriately with responsible reserves.



The average year most Indiana libraries were built was 1949. The average year of the most recent addition was 2003.

How reserve funds help sustain libraries

During emergencies and economic downturns, libraries rely on reserve funds. Unlike units of government like schools or jails, libraries may not levy for cumulative funds. The annual library budget and levy supports *annual operating expenses*. Responsible libraries will budget Rainy Day funds and LIRF to handle expected repairs and replacements of HVAC units, roofs, carpet, and elevators, as examples. Reserve funds and saving are much preferred over increased tax rate, new debt, and interest payments borne by taxpayers.

How public libraries compare with local units of government

Indiana's public libraries are careful stewards of the \$.04 of the property taxpayer's dollar¹ they receive. The level of transparency for libraries is far beyond the transparency for other units of government. For example, county and city departments are not required to submit every expenditure for review and approval, as required for libraries.

How property tax caps impact public libraries

In communities where property owners have hit the tax caps, libraries are disproportionately impacted by tax cap loss². The tax caps pit units against each other, and arcane state law requires libraries to request the maximum levy in order to secure needed Local Income Tax (LIT) funds. The public library receives, on average, 23% of its budget from LIT. Indiana Library Federation has lobbied to change the LIT law for more responsible and transparent budgeting.

¹ See DLGF breakdown of property tax dollar (school \$.42, city/town \$.24, county \$.19, special unit \$.07, library \$.04, township \$.03), at <https://www.in.gov/dlgf/2516.htm>

² See page 21 in "What do we know about Indiana's Property Tax Caps?", a study by Larry Deboer, 2015 at <http://indianafiscal.org/resources/IFPI%20Property%20Tax%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>

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