

SENATE THIRD READING

SB 965 (Blakespear)

As Amended June 22, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Prohibits, beginning January 1, 2028, a public library from requiring the presence of a parent or guardian for the issuance of a library card to a California resident who is 16 or 17 years of age.

Major Provisions

- 1) Authorizes a public library to require a parent's or guardian's consent or signature for the issuance of a library card to a California resident who is 16 or 17 years of age.
- 2) States that a public library shall not require a parent or guardian's consent or signature for the issuance of a library card to a California resident who is 16 or 17 years of age and an emancipated youth.

COMMENTS

Key provisions of the bill. This bill prohibits a public library from requiring that a parent or guardian be present for the issuance of a public library card to a California resident who is 16 or 17 years old, unless the minor is emancipated. This bill also authorizes a public library to require a parent's or guardian's consent or signature for the issuance of a library card to a California resident who is 16 or 17 years of age.

Current law allows for local decision-making, but variance in local policies leads to uneven library materials access for older youth. Current law does not specify how 16- and 17-year-olds obtain public library cards, which provides flexibility and discretion for public libraries to determine what is needed for youths under 18 to obtain a library card. Some public libraries require parents or guardians to be present for a child's library card application, some public libraries simply require a signature from a parent or guardian, and some do not require a signature at all, so long as the applicant has proof of identification and residency. Public libraries also do not have a uniform requirement for the age threshold for which an in-person parent is needed, or if a signature is needed. These decisions are currently made locally.

For example, the Los Angeles County Library requires that children under 18 must have a parent or guardian sign their library card application but does not require them to be in person; however, the Los Angeles County Library does require a parent or guardian to be present to fill out a form for a child under 18 to access the internet at the library.

The City of South Pasadena Public Library (Los Angeles County) requires for children (ages 0 to 12) and teens (ages 13-17) a parent or legal guardian must be present to sign their child or teen's library card application when applying in person. The parent or legal guardian must provide identification or proof of address, and are responsible for all materials borrowed on cards belonging to their children who are under the age of 18.

The Sacramento Public Library requires a parent to sign for anyone under age 18 because they are held financially responsible for anything the minor borrows. The parent (or guardian or caregiver) is authorized to access the account for their minor online. If a minor is under age 12,

library staff can give the adult the minor's borrowing information. For ages 13-17, the responsible adult can only be given this information for items that are overdue. The Sacramento Public Library also offers a second option of a limited card for youth ages 14-17 with a borrow limit of two items without any adult involvement. The rationale is limiting the number of items that can be lost.

For children under 18 years of age, the Colusa County Free Library will provide a library card if the minor is accompanied by a parent or guardian who also provides specified identification.

When developing local policies related to granting access to youth, individual public libraries may discuss and strive to balance materials access, youth privacy, and financial responsibility.

This bill proposes to prohibit public libraries from requiring that parents or guardians be present for the issuance of a public library card to a California resident who is 16- or 17-years old, which would provide for a uniform law on this policy. This bill does not make other changes to how a 16- or 17-year-old would obtain a public library card.

Public libraries are funded and operated primarily by local governments. As defined in statute, a public library (also known as a local public library or a local library) is a library, or two or more libraries, that serves its residents free of charge and that is operated by a single public jurisdiction, such as a county, city, special district, or joint powers authority. Typically, the jurisdiction of the public library designates a central library to coordinate activities among all the library branches within a jurisdiction. Preliminary 2023-24 data from the Public Libraries Survey show that 187 jurisdictions, with 1,127 sites (including central libraries and their branches), are operating in California. Regarding funding, around 94% of local library funding comes from local governments, and the remaining 6% comes from the state and federal governments.

According to the Author

"SB 965 expands access to public libraries for 16- and 17-year olds by prohibiting the requirement for a parent or guardian to be physically present when they apply for a library card. Public libraries provide important access to information, technology, educational resources and safe study places. Many older teens already manage significant responsibilities, and in-person requirements can create unnecessary barriers for families with busy work schedules or transportation limitations. SB 965 does not impact libraries' ability to require a parent or guardian signature or set policies regarding liability. SB 965 simply removes a procedural hurdle so more teens can access library services."

Arguments in Support

End Child Poverty California writes, "Despite being trusted to work, drive, and make important decisions about their lives and future, in many communities, 16- and 17-year olds are unable to independently obtain a library card. In-person parental-consent requirements can prevent access for those whose parents or guardians are unable to accompany them, limiting access to books, study materials, and employment resources. These barriers are impractical, inequitable, and out of step with the independence already expected of older youth.

SB 965 establishes a clear and consistent statewide standard allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to independently obtain and use a public library card. The bill removes unnecessary procedural hurdles for older teens without creating more work for public libraries. It preserves local control

over library operations and allows each library to decide whether a parent or guardian signature is required for an older teen to obtain a library card."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, no new state costs.

VOTES**SENATE FLOOR: 35-0-5**

YES: Allen, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Grayson, Hurtado, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Reyes, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Strickland, Umberg, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

ABS, ABST OR NV: Alvarado-Gil, Gonzalez, Grove, Niello, Valladares

ASM EDUCATION: 8-0-1

YES: Patel, Hoover, Ahrens, Bonta, Castillo, Garcia, Lowenthal, Pellerin

ABS, ABST OR NV: Zbur

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-0

YES: Wicks, Hoover, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

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