

AB-506 Youth Service Organizations: Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention

Effective January 1, 2022, all youth service organizations, including churches, in California that have any form of children / youth service within their operations or ministries must now adhere to a new legal “Standard of Care” as a result of the passage and signing into law of AB 506. The new law requires everyone, including administrators, employees, and volunteers, in the youth service organizations 18 years of age or older, and who has direct contact with, or supervision of, children for more than 16 hours per month or 32 hours per year to:

- Complete training in child abuse and neglect identification and reporting. The training requirement may be met by completing the online mandated reporter training provided by the Office of Child Abuse Prevention in the State Department of Social Services. The trainings for clergy and volunteers are 2 hours each. Click the following link to the training:

[Child Abuse Mandated Reporter Training \(mandatedreporter.ca.gov\)](https://mandatedreporter.ca.gov/)

Action for churches: Enroll all paid employees and regular volunteers who are involved in any form of children or youth services in the online training and keep a written record on those who have completed the training

- Undergo a background check to identify and exclude any persons with a history of child abuse. Even though background check is not new, the new law requires a request for all convictions or arrests pending adjudication from the California Department of Justice using the LIVE SCAN form, which is an unautomated process that involves fingerprinting and is not currently provided by existing background check providers.

Actions for churches:

- 1) Apply for authorization to receive state criminal history.
- 2) Appoint a person to be trained as the Custodian of Records so that this person can monitor the Applicant Agency Justice Connection (AAJC) system.
- 2) Require all paid employees and regular volunteers who have direct contact with, or supervision of, children for more than 16 hours per month or 32 hours per year to take the LIVE SCAN form to one of the LIVE SCAN locations to do fingerprinting for background check. This will cost the applicant up to \$80.

3) Since the LIVE SCAN system searches only ‘fingerprinted offenses’ and some CA criminal records are NOT searchable by fingerprint, the church needs to continue to engage with a private background check agency to perform thorough background checks.

- Establish policies designed to prevent and correctly respond to child sexual abuse. The policies must include, but are not limited to, a) the two-adult rule, requiring, to the greatest extent possible, the presence of two mandatory reporters, whenever administrators, employees, and volunteers are in contact or in the supervision of children or youth and b) mandatory reporting of suspected incidents of child abuse to persons or entities outside of the organization.

These policies should be applicable to each specific target group of youth / children. For example, if a program serves middle school boys, policies should directly address horseplay, wrestling, pornography, sexual topics, forms of electronic communication, drugs and alcohol. If a program serves teenaged girls, policies must directly address forms of electronic communication, social media, and sexual topics or requests for photos or video. A program serving very young children must promulgate very direct policies defining appropriate (and inappropriate) forms of touch – especially playful touch such as tickling or wrestling – as well as bathroom and potty-training policies.

Actions for churches:

- 1) Review the existing manpower to assign two mandatory reporters to staff / supervise activities which involve children or youth.
- 2) Modify the church’s existing Child / Youth Safety Policies to ensure compliance with the requirements of AB506.

Proof of Compliance

The law gives insurance carriers the right to seek proof of compliance before providing insurance coverage or renewal. As a result, if you ignore the requirements of AB 506 or fail to comply with the law, you may not be able to renew your church’s insurance coverage. Please ensure compliance as soon as possible.

Assistance from the Central Pacific District

1. To alleviate the financial burden from AB 506 on our churches to have all the administrators, employees, and volunteers who are involved in the children / youth ministries to do background check through LIVE SCAN, we will provide a scholarship of up to \$80 for each person who must do a LIVE SCAN. Just send us a list of individuals who have performed a LIVE SCAN and we will send you the scholarship.