

The Ultimate Guide for Churches and AB-506



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
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***Important Note:** California has passed additional legislation since AB-506 that adds additional requirements and provisions for mandated reporting in youth serving organizations. [Please check out our most recent webinar where we discuss these issues in depth.](#)

On the heels of many sexual abuse tragedies, the State of [California](#) has passed AB-506 to address child safety in youth serving organizations. California churches are now subject to mandated reporting legislation that includes mandatory reporter training, Live Scan Background Checks and required policies and procedures. This guide will walk you through the requirements, frequently asked questions and available resources to put your ministry on the road to compliance.

Additional Resources

-  CA Mandated Reporting Webinar (AB-506)
-  Understanding Mandated Reporter Training
-  Download the E-book on Background Checks
-  Download our Child Safety Template
-  Red Flags to Look for On Background Checks
-  Guide to Sexual Misconduct Liability Insurance

How do we comply with AB-506?

Getting your ministry compliant with AB-506 requires essentially 3 steps: background checks, training and implementing a child safety plan.

Live Scan Background Checks

To comply with California legal minimum requirements, all regular volunteers and ALL employees of youth-serving organizations must undergo a DOJ Live Scan background check. While other forms of background checks rely on personal identifiers such as date of birth or a social security number, Live Scan technology is based on your finger print.

A "Regular Volunteer" means a volunteer with the youth service organization who is 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 request a Live Scan, your church or ministry must register with the DOJ as a requesting agency. Your ministry will be assigned an Originated Requesting (Agency) Identifier, or ORI number, which allows your ministry to request Live Scan background checks through the California DOJ. Whether the CA DOJ, FBI or both are alerted by your Live Scan request depends upon how you submit each individual request form after receiving your ORI.

While the DOJ check meets the legally required minimum, we at ChurchWest recommend additional checks, including:

- An FBI check to obtain additional national information.
- A commercial background check on anyone who has moved to California in the last 7 years.

While the state required minimum is a good first step, these additional checks are good risk management practices to ensure the safety of your youth.

Mandated Reporter Training

Your next step to complying with AB-506 is to provide mandated reporter training to ALL of your employees and all regular volunteers (see the above).

There are options available for this training which include:

Free Training Through the State: Free training is available through the State of CA website, mandatedreporter.ca.gov. To complete the training, it requires that:

- Non-ministerial employees must complete the 4 hours of General Training.
- Ministerial employees (clergy) must complete the 4 hours of General Training, followed by the 2 hours of clergy training, equaling 6 hours total.
- Volunteers must complete the 2 hours of "Volunteer" training also available through the state website.

You will need to make sure those completing the training print their certificate of completion after the training is done, because that certificate can not be accessed once the module closed.

Faith Based Training: While the State provided training is the cheaper option, many ministries have found it valuable to use a specialized vendor for AB-506 compliant training.

Here are ChurchWest, we highly recommend your ministry check out our friends at [ChurchHRNetwork](#). There's a few reasons we recommend their training over the state's:

1. The training from CHRN is specific to the context of ministry, unlike the secular training offered by the state.
2. The training for employees and volunteers is only 90 minutes, compared to the 6 hours / 2 hours offered by the state.
3. Subscribers to CHRN can access an administrator portal where you can save completion certificates, and monitor which employees or volunteers have yet to complete required training.

[Click here to learn more about what ChurchHRNetwork has to offer.](#)

Updated Policies and Procedures

On top of background checks and training, AB-506 also requires your church to implement policies and procedures to prevent and report abuse. This includes creating and implementing new policies, such as background check policies, supervision policies, and reporting policies.

We recommend [downloading our sample model child protection policy](#) to get started, and reviewing your final child safety plan with your HR or Legal professional.

What are the biggest challenges for ministries to comply with these new requirements?

1. For ministries that haven't implemented Live Scan screening at their ministry, this is going to be different. It takes time to do so, may be more costly, and it isn't as convenient as previous online background check programs.
2. The legislation requires that, to the greatest extent possible, at least two mandated reporters are supervising all youth activities. However, generally speaking, volunteers are not considered to be mandated reporters. Volunteers continue to be considered 'permissive reporters', and are encouraged to report abuse. This is contrary to much information that has been published about AB506.
3. Previously created online training, online background check services, and guidance from insurance companies no longer meet the new requirements in California.
4. New policies will need to be created and implemented.
5. New training must be completed by ALL employees and your regular volunteers who work with youth.

We've looked to others for comprehensive guidance on how to implement AB506 in ministries in California. Unfortunately, all of what we've seen is focusing on the challenges of the new requirements or how it doesn't fit with what we've always done in the past. This is the new standard of care and your ministry must now meet these requirements.

It's going to be challenging for every ministry because it's likely that something is going to have to change in your processes. It takes more time. It is different. It may cost more money.

However, even though it is more work, we should be glad that we now have a standard of care that is now outlined for us. In the past it's always been a moving target and, when there was litigation, there would be a debate over what you should have done or could have done. Now, we know specifically, the minimum standard that must be met with screening, training, and supervision of youth. You should do more than what is outlined by AB506, but you can't do less.

Frequently Asked Questions

- ▶ [Is there a grace period for implementing these new requirements?](#)
- ▶ [Are churches considered "Youth Serving Organizations"?](#)
- ▶ [Are denominational offices considered to be "Youth Serving Organizations"?](#)
- ▶ [Are camps considered to be "Youth Serving Organizations"?](#)
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