



California Youth-Serving Organizations, AB 506 Compliance, and Best Practices for Volunteer & Staff Screening

A practical guide for youth sports leagues and clubs, camps, nonprofits, after-school and mentoring programs, and faith-based organizations. Updated September 2026.

Legal information — not legal advice.

This guide summarizes general requirements under California Assembly Bill 506 as of September 2026. Laws, fees, and agency procedures change over time and can vary based on your organization's structure and activities. Nothing here is legal advice, and using SecureSearch or Safeguard from Abuse does not by itself guarantee compliance. Confirm your specific obligations with qualified legal counsel and the California Department of Justice.

What this guide covers

- What AB 506 requires of youth-serving organizations in California
- What fingerprint-based Live Scan provides — and where it has limits
- What Live Scan actually costs, and who qualifies for reduced fees
- How SecureSearch supplements Live Scan with additional court and registry searches
- How Safeguard from Abuse supports the mandated-training and policy requirements

1. Who AB 506 Applies To

California Assembly Bill 506, codified as Business and Professions Code Section 18975, took effect on January 1, 2022. It sets minimum child-safety standards for “youth service organizations” — defined broadly as organizations that provide services or programs primarily to minors.

This is not a churches-only law. It reaches a wide range of youth-serving organizations, including:

- Youth sports leagues, clubs, and athletic associations
- Summer camps, day camps, and residential/overnight camps
- Nonprofit youth programs, after-school programs, and mentoring organizations
- Churches, ministries, and other faith-based youth programs
- Booster clubs and other parent-run youth organizations

If your organization employs or uses volunteers who supervise or have direct contact with minors, AB 506 most likely applies to you — whether you are a nonprofit or a for-profit entity. *Whether a specific role is covered depends on the facts; confirm borderline cases with counsel.*

2. What AB 506 Requires

Covered organizations must meet three core requirements:

1) Fingerprint-based Live Scan background checks

Administrators, employees, and “regular volunteers” must complete a Live Scan fingerprint background check through the California Department of Justice (and the FBI). Under the statute, a “regular volunteer” is generally an individual 18 or older who has direct contact with, or supervision of, children for more than 16 hours per month or 32 hours per year.

2) Mandated reporter training

Administrators, employees, and regular volunteers in covered roles must complete training in the identification and reporting of child abuse and neglect.

3) Written child abuse prevention policies

Organizations must adopt written policies covering prevention and reporting procedures. AB 506 directs that these policies provide, to the greatest extent possible, for the presence of at least two mandated reporters whenever administrators, employees, or volunteers are in contact with or supervising children (a “two-adult rule”).

Key point: AB 506 is more than a background check. It requires fingerprint Live Scan, mandated reporter training, and written policies. Meeting all three is the organization's responsibility.

Note: Organizations running licensed programs (for example, certain preschools or childcare licensed under Title 22) may face additional, separate background-check requirements. Those are outside the scope of this guide.

3. Live Scan: What It Provides — and Its Limits

Live Scan is the fingerprint-based check the law requires. It is the legal baseline, and it is valuable — but like any single check, it has known limitations that a thorough screening program should account for.

What Live Scan provides

- California DOJ criminal history records
- FBI fingerprint-based records (the Interstate Identification Index)

Known limitations of a fingerprint-only check

- It is not a multi-jurisdictional sex offender registry search. A separate registry search provides coverage a fingerprint check does not.
- Some offenses — particularly certain misdemeanors and arrests that were never fingerprinted — may not appear in fingerprint-based databases.
- Case dispositions (final outcomes) can be missing or delayed in the underlying records.
- DOJ delivers Live Scan results directly to your organization. SecureSearch cannot import those results into its system, so your staff must record and retain them separately.

Takeaway: Live Scan satisfies the AB 506 background-check requirement, but it is a baseline rather than a complete picture of an applicant's history.

4. What Live Scan Costs

“Free for volunteers” is a common misconception. The California DOJ state fee is waived for qualifying nonprofit youth-organization volunteers, but that does not make Live Scan free — the FBI fee and the vendor's rolling fee still apply. Employees, paid staff, and for-profit organizations generally do not receive the waiver and pay the full government fees.

Cost component	Qualifying nonprofit youth volunteer	Employee / paid staff / for-profit org
California DOJ fee	Waived	~\$32
FBI fee	~\$15 (reduced volunteer rate)	~\$17
Rolling fee (vendor, varies by location)	~\$20–\$40	~\$20–\$40
Typical total	~\$35–\$45	~\$70–\$90

Fees shown are typical amounts as of September 2026 and are illustrative, not a quote. Eligibility for the waiver and reduced volunteer rate depends on the ORI number and application type listed on your Request for Live Scan Service form — not simply on a person calling themselves a volunteer. Rolling fees are set by each vendor and vary by location. Confirm current fees and eligibility with the California DOJ volunteer program: oag.ca.gov/fingerprints/volunteers.

Bottom line: “Free” means the DOJ state fee is waived for qualifying nonprofit volunteers — not that there is zero cost, and not for everyone. Budget accordingly.

5. Where AB 506 Leaves Gaps — and How SecureSearch Closes Them

Important:

The searches in this section are optional, best-practice enhancements that supplement Live Scan. They are not additional legal requirements imposed by AB 506. SecureSearch does not perform Live Scan fingerprinting; DOJ-authorized vendors do. What SecureSearch adds is coverage for the gaps a fingerprint-only check leaves — and for a youth-serving organization, those gaps are exactly where the real risk lives.

AB 506 requires a fingerprint check. It does not require you to be thorough. Each known limitation of a fingerprint-only check has a direct, affordable fix:

The gap a fingerprint-only check leaves	How SecureSearch closes it
Live Scan is not a national sex offender registry search	National Sex Offender Registry (NSOR) search across jurisdictions
Many misdemeanors and unfingerprinted arrests never enter the fingerprint databases	County criminal court searches pull records directly from local courts — including cases that were never fingerprinted
Case dispositions can be missing or delayed	Direct court searches return current case status and final outcomes
Federal offenses may not surface in state or county records	Federal court searches across all 94 U.S. districts
A clean check today says nothing about next season	Continuous court monitoring alerts you to new activity after the initial check
Fingerprints reveal nothing about driving history	Motor vehicle records (MVRs) for anyone who transports children
An application or resume can overstate credentials	Employment and education verifications

Why MVRs matter here: In youth sports and camps, coaches and volunteers routinely drive children — to games, to tournaments, to trailheads. Live Scan tells you nothing about a suspended license, a DUI history, or a pattern of reckless-driving citations. For any program where adults get behind the wheel with minors, a motor vehicle record (MVR) check is one of the highest-value additions you can make — and the law does not cover it.

Screening is a snapshot — not a guarantee

Someone who passes a background check in the spring can be arrested before the season ends. Continuous court monitoring watches for new criminal activity between checks and alerts you when something changes — closing the time gap that any one-time check inevitably leaves.

Also available for specific roles: drug testing, civil court records, and international checks.

6. Safeguard from Abuse: Two of the Three Requirements

It is easy to treat AB 506 as a background-check law. It isn't — only one of its three requirements is screening. The other two, mandated reporter training and written child protection policies, sit entirely outside background checks. That is Safeguard from Abuse's domain. On a compliance basis, Safeguard addresses two-thirds of what AB 506 requires.

Safeguard from Abuse provides:

- Mandated reporter training — online, trackable, and required for every covered role
- Child abuse prevention training — recognizing grooming behaviors and responding appropriately
- Bullying prevention and first-aid refresher modules
- Completion certificates and quiz records to document your training compliance

Adopting, maintaining, and following your written policies remains your organization's responsibility; Safeguard provides the training and documentation that support two of the law's three requirements.

7. The Power of 2™

AB 506 has three requirements. Together, SecureSearch and Safeguard from Abuse help you meet all three — and go beyond them:

- **SecureSearch — the screening half.** Live Scan plus the gap-filling searches above (county, federal, NSOR, MVRs, monitoring, and verifications), delivered in one dashboard.
- **Safeguard from Abuse — the training-and-policy half.** Mandated reporter training, prevention training, and documentation supporting the other two requirements.

Screening covers one requirement; training and policy cover the other two. Live Scan remains the legal baseline required by AB 506, and final responsibility for meeting the law rests with your organization — but together, the two brands address the whole of it and add protection the law doesn't require.

8. A Roadmap for California Youth-Serving Organizations

Step 1 — Meet the AB 506 requirements

- Complete Live Scan for administrators, employees, and regular volunteers in covered roles

- Complete mandated reporter training (Safeguard from Abuse)
- Adopt and document written child protection policies, including the two-adult rule

Step 2 — Layer in best-practice screening

- Budget option: county criminal court searches plus a National Sex Offender Registry search
- Best-practice option: add federal court searches and continuous monitoring
- Add role-specific checks (for example, MVRs for drivers) where relevant

Step 3 — Document and maintain

- Record and retain Live Scan results, which DOJ sends directly to your organization
- Store SecureSearch reports in your portal and keep Safeguard training certificates on file
- Re-screen and refresh training on a schedule appropriate to your program

About SecureSearch & Safeguard from Abuse

SecureSearch is an independent, family-owned background screening company with more than 20 years of experience serving churches, nonprofits, and youth-serving organizations nationwide.

Safeguard from Abuse provides child safety, mandated reporter, bullying prevention, and first-aid training for organizations that work with children.

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