

Understanding Foursquare's Background Check Policy

For nearly 20 years, Foursquare has required criminal background checks for every adult serving with minors. This policy remains unchanged. However, state laws have evolved, creating varying standards and requirements that make a single national policy challenging. Some laws enhance child protection, while others limit access to criminal information, sometimes protecting offenders instead of children. This variability between states makes it unmanageable to have a detailed across-the-board national policy to meet each state's requirements. Below are three concepts that are important to keep in mind as you fulfill the background check requirements in the Child and Youth Protection Manual (2025).

Key Concepts

1. Background Checks Are Essential, but Not Enough

- Criminal background checks are required, but they are only one part of protecting children.
- A full screening process and strong ministry protection practices are critical and also required.
- Statistics show less than 10% (likely under 5%) of child abusers are ever convicted. Do not rely solely on background checks.

2. Use a Trustworthy Background Check Provider

- Know what your background check includes—and what it does not.
- Always check sex offender registries.
- Be aware: some states allow convicted offenders to remove their names from registries.
- Screen volunteers thoroughly with references and ask questions about past interactions with children.

3. Know Your State's Laws

- Some states require re-running checks at specific intervals—follow those rules.
- If fingerprint checks are required (e.g., California's "livescan"), note that these may not include sex offender registry checks. You may need an additional check.
- Understand what each type of check covers and what it does not.

Each child is precious. Thank you for creating safe environments for them to encounter Jesus.