

**URGENT TASK - Fingerprint Card Requirement
For Out-of-State Teams Traveling to California for the
Science Olympiad National Tournament
Updated April 24, 2026**

For the National Tournament in May, USC legal recently informed Science Olympiad that teams will need a minimum number of team chaperones to undergo a manual fingerprint background check process in order to comply with California's law AB506 which includes stringent Youth Protection policies. This requirement covers all out-of-state teams even if you had visited USC to attend a recent 2024, 2025, or 2026 Science Olympiad Invitational Tournament where you were able to stipulate background checks had been performed for team chaperones. USC has said they will not allow Science Olympiad teams to set foot on campus if they don't get this task done, even though they knew our tournaments end just one month before the big event! *****keep reading to the next page for the Chaperone Bullpen safety net we came up with as a Plan B*****

While we were surprised by this time-sensitive, intensive requirement, we know that you have the capability to clear this high bar. So, let's get to work!

Citing AB506, The University of Southern California Office of Youth Protection is requiring a minimum ratio of chaperones traveling with Science Olympiad teams to complete an FBI-level hard-card fingerprint scan and return it to USC. (In-state residents can perform Live Scans digitally.) USC will send you instructions, a set of physical fingerprint cards, and a postage-paid return envelope. They want your fingerprint form mailed back by May 2, 2026, in order for the DOJ to clear your prints. ***The letter USC sent you cites a "typical" 4-6 week window to complete this task, which obviously is out of range. The actual window to clear the prints once they arrive to USC's Office of Youth Protection is closer to 1 week – so get them in as fast as you can. Address at the end of this note.***

Two rules off the bat:

- ALL adults staying in the dorms with the kids MUST complete the fingerprint process, pass the check and do the online training.
- The chaperone may be ANY person over the age of 18 traveling with your team who is not a competitor that can complete the fingerprint process, pass the check and do the and online training – this is SUCH A GREAT TASK to assign to team parents and mentors – it does not have to be the head coach from the school.

Here's some helpful clarifying language directly from the USC Office of Youth Protection as of 04/21/26 regarding parent chaperones. If you want to make extra sure you're reading this right, you can email minors@usc.edu or contact one of the people listed at the end of this memo:

- *"If 100% of the Science Olympiad team is accompanied and will be directly supervised at all times by each of their parents and lodging off campus, then they are fully exempt from the requirements of the USC Youth Protection portal, the training and any associated YP forms including fingerprint cards."*

- *“Furthermore, a student traveling with a parent or guardian – whether lodging on or off campus – may only be excluded from the chaperone ratio if that parent/guardian is providing direct supervision at all times, including during daytime activities. If the parent/guardian is only present overnight or is not supervising their child during the day (e.g., while the student is participating with the team or under a coach), the student must be included in the chaperone ratio and provided appropriate supervision during those times.”*

The Ratio of Fingerprint Card chaperones per Science Olympiad team is:

- Division B, (age 9-14) 1:10 ratio of chaperones to students (2 to meet, 3 if you have more than 20).
- Division C (age 15-under 18), 1:12 ratio of chaperones to students (1-2 to meet depending on how many seniors +18 will be present; if you bring 7 seniors who turn 18 before 5/21/26, then you may only need 1 adult chaperone to go through the process). Please count carefully!

To get hard-card fingerprinted using the FBI background check form FD-258, you need to visit your local police station or a private fingerprinting company! USC will then use the information to perform a background check through the Department of Justice, which you must pass. You will also have to share your social security number and date of birth and complete a two-hour online training module.

Teams will have VERY SHORT NOTICE to complete this task. The late April tournaments will have to respond to this request urgently; we know this is stressful!

Each team will be responsible for assigning the coach fingerprint card task and reporting to USC. Again, any 18+ adult staying in the USC dorms **MUST** return the fingerprint card – no passed check, no entry. USC has a dashboard system that they will be watching carefully; if they do not see two green checks indicating two passed background checks – they have told us that your Science Olympiad team will be prevented from competing.

A Parachute!

Naturally, we were extremely upset to learn that any team could potentially be turned away from our National Tournament especially after working so hard all year. We have found an acceptable emergency solution that can be used by for teams who cannot get their fingerprint cards cleared in time and are not staying on campus in the dorms.

California Science Olympiad is creating a pool of Live Scanned chaperones (sympathetic Los Angeles teachers, USC and other campus Science Olympiad Alumni club members) who can accompany your team to the STEM Expo, Friday Opening Ceremony and Saturday's competition day and Closing Ceremony (basically anytime your team is on the USC campus). We are calling this the Chaperone Bullpen – and it's a scenario of last resort. Do not count on this – your first task should be completing the fingerprint form. This pool of assigned chaperones **CANNOT** stay in the dorms with teams; if you feel the timing of the task won't fit your team schedule – stay in a hotel; many are listed on the 2026 website.

FAQs:

I am already fingerprint checked in my state for my job do I still have to do this?

Yes.

Where do I go to get this done?

You should call your local police station to see if they provide this service to residents; some don't! And those who do have particular hours. If your station does not provide the service, then you can Google private hard fingerprint providers. Some local UPS Stores do this. USC says you can fill out a form and get reimbursed for any cost you incur.

Can I get my own FD-258 card/form or do I have to wait for the USC packet?

No. The USC packet has an ID code to process the form, so you do have to wait for it.

Can I use an inkpad and do the fingerprints myself?

No. The form has a space where an official (someone trained to do fingerprints) has to sign it.

What does the packet look like?

It will come in a USPS red, white and blue Priority Mail envelope and contain an instruction sheet, the FD-258 form/card, a sample card, and a pre-addressed return envelope with a tracking number. If you are pressed for time, you can overnight or FedEx the fingerprint card/form back to USC at the address they provided.

Do all the adult spectators on my team have to do this?

No. Remaining team parents, coaches and other guests will be considered spectators, not subject to the checks.

What happens if my card gets lost in the mail?

There is a tracking number on the return envelope; please watch it carefully. If you use UPS or FedEx, watch the tracking like a hawk.

What happens if the DOJ does not return my result in time for the tournament?

Your team will have to be assigned a bullpen chaperone; you cannot stay in the USC dorms.

How many people on my team need to undergo this requirement?

See the ratio section above.

Why didn't Science Olympiad tell us about this sooner?

This was a surprise to us all. We didn't know about the requirement until a couple weeks ago and have been trying to find a solution so that no teams would be turned away.

What is the actual process USC is using once they receive our fingerprint cards?

"Once the applicant is fingerprinted, the FD-258 must be returned to (**USC**) for review. USC then reviews the FD-258 Fingerprint Cards and verifies the agency information, billing number, applicant type, and fees. We then **mail** the FD-258 Fingerprint Cards to the California DOJ in Sacramento along with the appropriate transmittal forms. We can send multiple cards out at a time to the CA DOJ. From the day we mail out the cards to the day we get the clearance online, it is usually about a week. In previous occasions when it has taken about a week, we have sent out the mail to Sacramento through Priority 2-3 day mail. For the incoming Science Olympiad Cards, we'll be sending them out via USPS Express Overnight Mail to hopefully cut a day or two from the week timeline."

For questions, please reach out to the USC Office of Youth Protection:

Carissa Coons, Director, Youth Protection Program - ccoons@usc.edu

Gabe Gates, Associate VP for Compliance - ggates@usc.edu

Madison Lang, Youth Protection Coordinator - langmadi@usc.edu

This is the address to send completed fingerprint cards to:

2026 Science Olympiad National Tournament

c/o USC ~ Talent Acquisition Compliance

3434 S. Grand Avenue

CAL Bldg 3rd Floor 302-26A

Los Angeles, CA 90089-2812

ATTN: Ari Jacinto

■ Updated 4/24/26 at 4:28pm CT, SO HQ