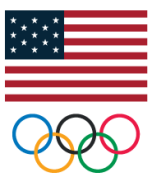




**Certification Renewal Recommendation Report for
USA Team Handball**

December 7, 2022



**UNITED STATES
OLYMPIC & PARALYMPIC
COMMITTEE**



USA Team Handball Certification Renewal Executive Summary

In May 2022, the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) Certification Review Group (CRG), in accordance with the USOPC's NGB Certification Policy, began a certification renewal review of USA Team Handball (USATH).¹ The CRG evaluated USATH and, based on input from CRG members and the results of NGB Audit's 2021 Compliance Audit², recommends a current rating of Renewal in Good Standing.

The CRG's review of USATH found that the organization is meeting most of the USOPC's NGB Compliance Standards in the five core areas of evaluation for certification: Governance and Compliance, Financial Standards and Reporting Practices, Athlete Protections and Rights, Sport Performance, and Operational Performance. A Compliance Audit, conducted by the USOPC's NGB Audit team in 2021, found that USATH's bylaws and several of its policies and procedures required revisions to fully meet the NGB Compliance Standards, among other findings. During the NGB Audit remediation period, USATH resolved the majority of its findings; however, three remained open through the CRG's deadline to resolve issues. USATH is aware of and actively working to resolve the open NGB Audit findings and the CRG determined that the remaining open audit findings are marginal deficiencies that do not impact USATH's certification status.

The CRG agreed that USATH is presently meeting the requirements and expectations for an NGB. In its discussions of USATH's interactions with the USOPC, the CRG did not identify any operational concerns or cultural issues that would prevent the organization's continued certification. Overall, in the areas in which CRG members had interacted with USATH, the CRG had a satisfactory view of USATH's operations.

As a result of this review, the CRG recommends that USATH be granted a certification status of Renewal in Good Standing for a four-year certification term ending in 2026.

¹ See Appendix for more information about the certification process, including a link to the NGB Certification Policy.

² [NGB Audit Report](#) and [NGB Audit Addendum Report](#).



Organizational Overview

USATH is the USOPC-certified NGB for team handball and is recognized as the U.S representative to the International Handball Federation (IHF). USATH's mission is "to develop, promote, educate and grow the sport of Team Handball at all levels in the United States, and to enable United States athletes to achieve sustained competitive excellence to win medals in international and Olympic competition."³ The NGB works to support and grow the national club structure, collegiate clubs and intramural programs, grassroots and youth programs, as well as Senior, Youth and Junior Men's and Women's National Teams.⁴ The NGB is overseen by thirteen staff and is headquartered in Colorado Springs, Colorado.⁵

Certification History

USA Team Handball was originally certified in January 2021.⁶ The CRG's certification review was initiated based on USATH's scheduled quadrennial certification review. USATH's certification status has not been referred for review outside of the standard NGB certification review schedule.

Certification Exceptions⁷

USATH did not request any exceptions from the NGB Compliance Standards during its certification review.

Athlete Representation Approval and Exceptions⁸

USATH requested that the Athlete Representation Review Working Group (ARRWG) approve additional competitions as qualifying events for 10-Year and 10-Year+ status to expand the pool of athletes eligible to serve as athlete representatives. These competitions are:

- NACHC Beach Championships
- NACHC Indoor Championships
- ANOC World Beach Games
- IHF World Championships – Beach
- IHF World Championships – Indoor

The ARRWG approved all competitions as presented to expand 10-Year and 10-Year+ definitions for USATH.

In addition, USATH requested and received approval for three committees to be defined as Designated Committees. These include:

- Judicial Committee
- Audit Committee
- Nominating & Governance Committee

Certification Review⁹

Governance and Compliance

The CRG determined that USATH is fulfilling the Governance and Compliance-related responsibilities for an NGB. USATH has adopted and enforces a code of conduct and gifts and entertainment policy; has made

³ [About USATH](#)

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ [Staff Directory](#), USATH Website.

⁶ Refer to the Appendix for additional details on the initial certification.

⁷ Refer to the Appendix for details on exception requests to the NGB Compliance Standards.

⁸ Refer to the Appendix for details on athlete representation exception requests.

⁹ Refer to the Appendix for additional details on the review standards and process for information related to NGB Audit's Report on USATH.



its policies available on its website; and has defined procedures to address violations of its policies. USATH has not been the subject of any complaints filed with the Dispute Resolution Unit in the last four years.

During the 2021 Compliance Audit, NGB Audit found that USATH's Nominating and Governance Committee did not meet the minimum athlete representation requirements of the NGB Compliance Standards. Furthermore, two athlete representatives serving on Designated Committees did not meet the eligibility requirements outlined in the USOPC Bylaws. To remediate the finding, USATH met with the ARRWG to request an expansion of qualifying events for athletes to meet athlete representation eligibility criteria, as noted above. Once the ARRWG approved the request, NGB Audit conducted follow-up testing to confirm that USATH's board and Designated Committees met the athlete representation requirements and that athlete representatives meet the eligibility criteria.

NGB Audit also found that USATH required revisions to its bylaws to include missing elements required by the NGB Compliance Standards. USATH updated its bylaws to include the missing elements, as well as updated the definition of independent perspective and added language to make an Affiliated Organization board of director seat available. NGB Audit also found that USATH initially did not conduct a formal onboarding process for board or committee members. During the remediation period, USATH implemented the formal onboarding process to meet NGB Compliance Standards.

In addition to bylaws updates, NGB Audit found that USATH's conflict of interest policy to meet the NGB Compliance Standards. NGB Audit verified that USATH made the required revisions and implemented processes to ensure conflict of interest disclosure forms are submitted and reviewed timely. During follow-up testing, NGB Audit confirmed that USATH demonstrated compliance with its conflict of interest disclosure process; however, NGB Audit cannot verify whether the disclosure forms are reviewed by its Judicial Committee in accordance with the policy until its scheduled review in November 2022. Although this finding remains open, USATH demonstrated significant improvement and NGB Audit does not note any concerns relating to this issue that impact certification status.

Financial Standards and Reporting Practices

USATH meets the requirements for an NGB's Financial Standards and Reporting Practices. The organization demonstrates financial operational capability to administer its sport and is financially and operationally transparent, while maintaining accountability to its members and to the USOPC.

In the 2021 Compliance Audit, NGB Audit found that USATH needed to update its financial policies and procedures to include missing elements to meet the NGB Compliance Standards. In updating its financial policies and procedures, NGB Audit noted that USATH addressed and remediated an aged finding from 2018 relating to internal controls as well. In addition, NGB Audit found that the funding reports provided to the USOPC were incorrect and did not match the general ledger details. USATH updated its process, and the general ledger matched the final grant report submitted for 2021. USATH was also required to receive board approval of its budget before or at the start of the fiscal year 2022, which management accomplished to meet compliance.

Athlete Protection and Rights

The USOPC is not aware of any USATH non-compliance issues with anti-doping rules and requirements and those of the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency. The CRG also found that USATH maintains and enforces an athlete safety program consistent with the requirements of relevant federal law, as well as with the policies and standards of the USOPC and the U.S. Center for SafeSport (the Center). The USOPC is not aware of any cases it has received in the past four years concerning USATH that should have been reported to the Center but were not reported in accordance with the Center's reporting requirements. For its part, the USOPC has reported all matters to the Center relating to USATH that the USOPC was required to report.

In 2021, the Center conducted its most recent Administrative Audit of USATH's implementation of policies required by the Center's SafeSport Code and Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies. USATH received "Partially Implemented" and "Not Implemented" ratings in two areas of evaluation: education and training, and quality control, respectively, which resulted in findings and directions for corrective actions required by the Center.¹⁰ Specifically, the Center found that "USATH must require and implement effective procedures to ensure that USATH board, staff, national coaches, regional ambassadors, and committee members...are trained every twelve months regardless of whether they are participating in USATH activities, and must ensure that communications regarding minor athlete training provides clear direction for how to access the training resources."¹¹ Furthermore, USATH was required to "establish a written policy for all USATH owned and sanctioned events and competitions [to]: prevent participation or regular contact with or authority over minors for those individuals who have not completed SafeSport training but are required to do so, address one-day/short term memberships, address all last-minute and day-of registrations by individuals...and provide oversight and monitoring of...requirements by USATH for all events sanctioned by USATH."¹² USATH took corrective action to resolve the Center's findings and the Center confirmed USATH's full compliance as of February 15, 2022.¹³ The Center conducted its most recent Event Audit¹⁴ at Adrian College in Adrian, Missouri on May 12-13, 2022, resulting in no findings or directions for corrective actions.

In the 2021 Compliance Audit, NGB Audit found that USATH did not have formal anti-doping policies or procedures to enforce anti-doping sanctions, and that its bylaws were missing anti-doping language required by the NGB Compliance Standards. Additionally, USATH did not include required anti-doping language in membership waivers. To remediate these issues, USATH updated its anti-doping policies and procedures, its bylaws, and the membership waivers to include the required anti-doping language.

NGB Audit also found that USATH's background check policy was missing required elements and that during testing, individuals working in an official capacity with the NGB had not completed the required background screening, which was a repeat finding noted in a previous audit. USATH updated its background check policy to include the required elements and during follow-up testing, NGB Audit verified USATH's full compliance.

Sport Performance

USATH is fulfilling its obligations in Sport Performance. The organization maintains and executes a strategic plan that supports athletes in achieving sustained competitive excellence and grows the sport. USATH established clear selection procedures and executed them effectively to name and train Team USA athletes for Delegation Events.

During the 2021 Compliance Audit, NGB Audit initially found that USATH did not provide its high-performance plan to the USOPC by the established deadline. To remediate the finding, USATH worked with USOPC Sports Performance to develop the plan and submit it by the end of January 2022. Management also committed to timely submission of future high-performance plans.

Operational Performance

The CRG determined that USATH demonstrates sufficient managerial capability to administer its sport and maintains adequate insurance to manage its risk, fulfilling its Operational Performance obligations.

In the 2021 Compliance Audit, NGB Audit found that while USATH met the equal opportunity standard as required by the Act, it did not provide anti-discrimination training as required by the NGB Compliance

¹⁰ [US Center for SafeSport Administrative Audit Report – USA Team Handball](#), September 17, 2021.

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Id.*

¹³ [US Center for SafeSport Corrective Actions Update – USA Team Handball](#), February 25, 2022.

¹⁴ [US Center for SafeSport 2022 Event Audit Report – Adrian College – Adrian, MI](#), May 12-13, 2022.



Standards. During the remediation period, USATH confirmed that the required training had been completed by applicable parties, which NGB Audit verified as fully compliant. Furthermore, NGB Audit found that USATH did not consistently monitor and report progress against the organization's strategic plan's measurable outcomes. To remediate this finding, USATH implemented a quarterly review of its progress on executing its strategic plan. Additionally, although USATH established performance criteria that are the same for all athletes regardless of gender, the criteria to qualify for Elite Athlete Health insurance were not initially published online or in an athlete handbook. USATH took corrective action by publishing its performance criteria on its website, which NGB Audit verified as compliant.

NGB Audit also found that USATH's grievance procedures were missing required elements, and that management did not maintain adequate documentation of the complaints filed or the resolution. Furthermore, NGB Audit noted that two additional aged audit findings relating to grievance procedures were still un-remediated. USATH took corrective action and updated the grievance procedures to include the required elements and updated its tracking process to ensure fair notice requirements are met, which also remediated the two prior audit findings. During testing of the most recent grievance, USATH provided sufficient documentation which showed significant improvement; however, management did not follow the process outlined by the procedures. This finding will remain open until another grievance is filed with USATH for NGB Audit to test. Although open, NGB Audit and the CRG determined this finding does not impact certification status.

Although the CRG determined that USATH demonstrates sufficient managerial capability to merit a Renewal in Good Standing certification status, members noted that USATH should continue to improve in this area longer term. During the 2021 Compliance Audit, NGB Audit identified several concerns related to unreasonable and unplanned staff turnover and the historical inability of the board to refrain from day-to-day operational involvement. While USATH has made significant improvements to its managerial capability, including creating an employee handbook, hiring new staff, adding staff resources, and maintaining and developing sponsor relationships, additional time is needed to show practices are sustainable and effective.

USATH maintains a 2021-2023 DE&I Action Plan that describes its vision and strategy for the coming years. USATH submitted its action plan to the USOPC with sufficient detail, meeting the NGB Compliance Standards. USATH's plan contains seven objectives, with specific initiatives, target groups, timelines, and success measures. Objectives include engraining DE&I culture into the team handball community, building a DE&I curriculum, achieving societal representativity among the board of directors and staff positions as well as players, as well as attaining higher DE&I accountability standards.

Conclusion

The CRG has concluded that USATH is performing satisfactorily overall based on input from the CRG members and the results of the NGB Audit team's 2021 Compliance Audit. USATH is in the process of addressing the remaining open audit findings; however, the CRG determined that these do not affect USATH's certification status due to the organization's significant progress. Accordingly, the CRG recommends that USATH's certification as a member organization of the USOPC be renewed with a status of Renewal in Good Standing.



Appendix

Certification Renewal Process

The USOPC believes in a culture of strong governance, ethics, and compliance among the NGBs that, as member organizations of the USOPC, make up the Olympic and Paralympic movement. Recent amendments to the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act, which became effective in late 2020, require the USOPC to certify NGBs.¹⁵ The USOPC determined that as of January 1, 2021, all member organizations would be certified, and their certifications would be reviewed for renewal on a rolling basis every four years.¹⁶

Governed by the USOPC's [Certification Renewal Policy](#), the NGB certification review process is supported by a cross-functional body of professionals at the USOPC, the Certification Review Group (CRG), who interact with NGBs in their day-to-day work. These professionals evaluate an NGB's operations across multiple functional areas to provide a holistic review of an NGB's performance and culture.¹⁷ In addition to enumerated standards for NGB performance described in the Act, the Bylaws, and the USOPC's [NGB Compliance Standards](#), the CRG considers departmental observations about an NGB's operations that may not be identified in a formal audit scenario but are relevant to consider when evaluating an NGB's overall performance.

Certification Standards, Exceptions, and Review Components

As described in Section 8.4.1 of the [USOPC Bylaws](#), NGBs must satisfy certification requirements in five core areas: Governance and Compliance, Financial Standards and Reporting Practices, Athlete Safety, Sport Performance, and Operational Performance. The USOPC Implementation Guide for NGB Compliance Standards provides NGBs with specific guidance for how they will be evaluated in each of these core areas.

Section 8.4.2 of the USOPC Bylaws permits an NGB to submit a request for limited exceptions to any of the NGB Compliance Standards which, as a result of its overall structure or other extenuating circumstances, cannot or need not be reasonably met. The CRG evaluates all requests received and grants or denies such limited exceptions.

Various provisions of Section 8.5 of the USOPC Bylaws permit NGBs to seek exceptions related to minimum athlete representation requirements on boards and designated committees as well as exceptions or additions to which of its committees are considered designated committees. The Athlete Representation Review Working Group evaluates and approves or denies all requests made under Section 8.5.

¹⁵ See §220521(a) of the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act.

¹⁶ NGB Certification Policy, Section 1.

¹⁷ The CRG uses a four-year lookback period during this review process.