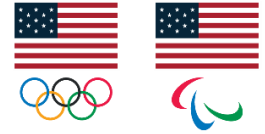


TEAM USA ATHLETE BENEFITS HARDSHIP EXTENSION PROCEDURE



Overview

Procedure Name: Team USA Athlete Benefits Hardship Extension

Publication Date: 1/1/2026

Procedure Owner: Sr. Dir., Athlete Healthcare & Administration

Applies to: Team USA Athletes

1. Purpose

The USOPC's Team USA Athlete Benefits Hardship Extension Procedure explains the eligibility requirements, request process, and approval process for Team USA Athletes to be granted a 12-month hardship extension to maintain their current Team USA Athlete Benefits.

2. Definitions

Hardship. Hardships are circumstances that temporarily impair an athlete's ability to participate in competitions and events at the performance level necessary to requalify for Team USA and/or USOPC benefits. Hardships are unexpected, beyond an athlete's control, and have a significant impact on athlete's performance.

3. Procedure Outline

When injury, illness or another unforeseen event impacts an athlete's ability to train or compete (ie: a Hardship), the top priority is to ensure the athlete can focus on recovery and long-term health. If a current Team USA athlete experiences a Hardship, they may request to have their benefits extended for 12 months in accordance with this Procedure. If the extension request is granted, they will continue to receive the same athlete benefits and resources that they had at the time of the Hardship for 12 months from the start of the next Team USA eligibility period, so long as the athlete intends to return to Team USA competitions and adheres to the Team USA Athlete Benefits Policy and conditions in this procedure.

Upon conclusion of the one-year extension, the athlete will need to requalify for Team USA or be granted an additional extension to continue to receive the same tier of benefits.

A. ELIGIBILITY FOR HARDSHIP EXTENSION

A current Team USA Tier A or B athlete who did not requalify for Team USA may be eligible for a Hardship Extension period of 12 months so long as the athlete:

- Submits a request and required documentation per the defined process
- Demonstrates they've experienced a hardship that directly impacted their ability to requalify for Team USA per the published criteria
- Intends to return to competition at an elite level and requalify for Team USA

- If applicable, follows the treatment plan prescribed by their medical provider
- Gives permission for the USOPC to notify the NGB of their extension status solely for the purpose of administering benefits. The respective NGB is required to keep this status confidential and cannot discriminate or retaliate against the athlete.
- Is in good standing and compliant with all eligibility and participation requirements established by WADA, USADA, the USOPC Athlete Safety Policy, the SafeSport Code, the USOPC, a National Governing Body (NGB), or International Federation

Athletes should know that receipt of benefits and services during the extension period shall not be contingent upon any agreement that stipulates the athlete must continue to train during the recovery period so long as they follow any treatment plans prescribed by medical providers, if applicable. Athletes must requalify by the end of the extension period to continue receiving benefits and services or request an additional extension.

C. APPROVAL PROCESS

i. Athlete Request

The athlete must submit a Hardship Extension Request via Athlete 360, within 30 days of the athlete's current benefit tier end-date. If the athlete does not currently have access to Athlete 360, they can find instructions on how to create an account in Agora. A USOPC Athlete Healthcare Navigator will receive and process the request. The form will request information about the Hardship including:

- Type of Hardship
- Evidence to support Hardship
- Description of Hardship and how it directly impacted the athlete's ability to requalify
- If applicable, the return to sport/treatment plan
- Acceptance of terms and conditions

ii. Initial Review

A member of the athlete healthcare team will review the Hardship Extension requests and supporting evidence monthly to make an initial determination of:

- Approved** – the administrator will immediately grant the Hardship Extension if this is the athlete's first Hardship Extension Request AND the athlete demonstrates that it is more likely than not that the Hardship directly impacted their ability to qualify for Team USA.
- Move to Committee** – the administrator will move all Hardship Extension Requests that are not approved to the committee to make a final determination.
- Denied** – A Hardship Extension request will be denied if the athlete is not a current Team USA A or B athlete, the athlete is currently under a period of ineligibility, the request comes outside of the request window or does not align with USOPC Hardship definition.

iii. Final Review Committee

The Final Review Committee will review and make determinations on all Hardship Extension Requests marked "moved to committee" within 30 days of receipt of the athlete's complete Hardship Extension Request file. The Final Review Committee will be assembled by the Dispute Resolution Unit (DRU) and consist of the following members:

- One (1) athlete representative (from a different sport)
- One (1) member of Sports Medicine Team (not directly involved with the athlete's healthcare)
- One (1) member of Sports Performance Team (from a different sport)

The Final Review Committee will adhere to the non-adversarial procedures located in the *USOPC Dispute Resolution Handbook*.¹

The Final Review Committee will consider the totality of the circumstances when reaching a decision. Some factors the Final Review Committee may consider include, but are not limited to:

- Does the athlete meet all criteria outlined in Section 2A?
- Does the athlete demonstrate this Hardship directly impacted their inability to requalify as Team USA?
- Did the athlete provide supporting evidence (per Section 2D) demonstrating the significance of the Hardship on their inability to requalify for Team USA?
- How many times has the athlete received a Hardship extension or other athlete benefits extension? Is this Hardship request a continuation of a previous Hardship or a new one?

The Final Review Committee's Hardship extension determination is final and binding and cannot be appealed or otherwise challenged by the athlete. If the extension is denied, the athlete will transition services per the specific terms outlined on the applicable Team USA Athlete Benefits program procedures/page for the service in question.

D. TYPES OF HARDSHIP & REQUIRED EVIDENCE

The USOPC understands Hardships to be unexpected, beyond an athlete's control, and have a significant impact on the athlete's ability to train and compete as a Team USA athlete. Because of this, defining exact Hardships that will be recognized is challenging. In general, the following types of Hardships are eligible for this extension so long as the athlete demonstrates the direct impact of the Hardship on the athlete's ability to requalify for Team USA.

- **Medical/Mental Health Conditions**
- **Natural Disasters**
- **Victim of Crime**
- **Major Incidents**
- **Partner Ineligibility/Hardship**
- **Other Unforeseen Hardships**

4. Discontinuation of Hardship

An athlete will stop receiving Athlete Benefits through the Hardship Extension when:

- The athlete requalifies for the same level of support by meeting the current Team USA eligibility criteria, or
- The 12-month extension period has concluded, or
- The athlete otherwise becomes ineligible to receive Team USA Athlete Benefits (e.g., anti-doping rule violation, SafeSport Code violation, etc.)

If an athlete becomes ineligible for Team USA athlete benefits or their extension period expires, benefits will transition per the specific terms outlined on the applicable Team USA Athlete Benefit program procedures/page for the service in question.

¹ The USOPC Dispute Resolution Procedures related to Background Checks will be used to supplement this Procedure. Where there is any irreconcilable conflict with the USOPC Dispute Resolution Procedures, this document shall prevail.

5. Procedure History

Publication Type	Policy Approver	Enabling Action	Publication Date	Next Review	Revision Summary
Initial publication	Chief Medical Officer (CMO)	CMO Approval	1/1/2026	1/1/2027	N/A- Initial publication.