

USA Fencing Black Card Policy

Effective Date: September 19, 2026

Approved By: USA Fencing Board of Directors

1. Scope and Application

1.1 This Black Card Policy applies to all USA Fencing events and participants, including athletes, coaches, referees, spectators, and any other individuals present at or affiliated with USA Fencing—sanctioned activities.

1.2 It governs all black cards issued at local, regional, and national tournaments, as well as any black cards subsequently rescinded, and it encompasses both active and rescinded cards for tracking and review purposes.

1.3 The scope includes circumstances involving Level 2 Black Cards, as well as cases in which an individual receives a second Level 1 Black Card during an active probation period. The Black Card Review Group (BCRG) provides the review, with administrative support from the National Office.

2. Roles and Composition

2.1 The BCRG is constituted as follows: two members from each of the Tournament Committee, the Referees' Commission, and the Ethics Committee, and two athletes selected by the Athlete Council.

2.2 The National Office designates a staff member, the Officials Coordinator, to manage submitted black cards and notifications and to maintain records and communications.

2.3 The National Office General Counsel or Member Safety & Organizational Compliance Coordinator may serve as an advisor to the BCRG.

2.4 The BCRG Chair coordinates meetings and workflow, ensuring that annual and case-specific reviews are scheduled, conducted, and documented.

3. Reporting, Tracking, and Recordkeeping

3.1 All black cards—whether issued or rescinded and regardless of tournament level—must be reported to the National Office at the conclusion of events. This may be done either during the results upload through the USA Fencing tournament organizer dashboard or via email at information@usafencing.org.

3.2 Every black card, including those later rescinded, will be entered into a central database maintained by the National Office, along with all supporting documentation and the rationale for issuance or removal. All such reports will be made available to be reviewed by the Referees Commission, National Office and Ethics Committee.

3.3 Tournament organizers, referees, and Head Referees must submit the Black Card Form and may also submit additional detailed written reports for each black card, with particular attention to the factual basis and reasons for any rescission.

3.4 The National Office manages tracking, documentation, and notification processes to support intra-organizational transparency, oversight, and consistency.

3.5 Confidentiality Statement: All information related to black cards is to be handled with strict confidentiality. Access to the central database and related documentation is restricted to authorized personnel only. At the discretion of the National Office, limited information may be shared with individuals or entities directly involved in the review and adjudication process.

4. Black Card Criteria

4.1 Level 1 Black Card, Standard Black Card

A Level 1 Black Card is imposed for disrespect, unsportsmanlike conduct, disruptive acts, and other infractions that are not severe enough to warrant Level 2 designation.

A Level 1 Black Card triggers a 12-month probation period beginning on the date of issuance.

4.2 Level 2 Black Card, Severe Offenses

A Level 2 Black Card is imposed for repeated Level 1 offenses, deliberate violence, verbal or thematic threats, or verified cheating.

A Level 2 Black Card may result in tournament exclusion for two to six months and a 24-month probation period, with longer or more severe sanctions possible for egregious acts based on case-specific facts and BCRG review.

Accumulation of a second Level 1 Black Card during an active probation period elevates the case to Level 2 review by the BCRG.

5. Review and Disciplinary Procedures

5.1 Formal Review

A Formal Review is triggered by issuance of a Level 2 Black Card or by the accumulation of a second Level 1 Black Card during an active probation period.

Upon trigger, the National Office notifies all pertinent parties (including but not limited to the carded individual and the referee) and offers an opportunity to submit statements and supporting materials within seven business days. At the discretion of the BCRG, this timeframe may be shortened or extended if the circumstances warrant.

Carded individuals may request a hearing by video or a review based on the written submissions.

The Formal Review shall be conducted by a panel of three members of the BCRG, selected in accordance with procedures established by the BCRG. One third of the Panel shall be an athlete representative. Panel members shall disclose any actual or apparent conflicts of interest. Any panel member with such a conflict shall be recused and replaced.

The three-member panel shall review all relevant documentation, conduct the hearing (if requested), and determine an appropriate sanction to safeguard the integrity of competition and the safety of members. In conducting its review, the panel shall apply a

preponderance of the evidence standard, under which a violation is established if it is more likely than not to have occurred.

5.2 Sanction Implementation and Communication

The National Office shall communicate all decisions, sanctions, and probation terms to the affected parties and relevant committees and officials and records such decisions in the central database.

Each communication will include clear appeal rights and timelines, and any conditions associated with reinstatement or completion of probation.

5.3 Appeal

Following a Formal Review, a carded individual whose ability to participate has been affected by the sanction may request an appeal within five business days of notice of the decision.

If an appeal is not requested within the stated timeframe, the Formal Review decision shall become final.

If an appeal is requested, the appeal shall be heard by the available members of the BCRG, excluding any members who participated in the original three-member Formal Review Panel. All participating members shall disclose any actual or apparent conflicts of interest. Any member with such a conflict shall be recused from the appeal.

The review shall be based on the record developed during the Formal Review and any written submissions and exhibits submitted by the Parties. The BCRG may, in its discretion, permit additional written submissions but shall not conduct a new evidentiary hearing.

The BCRG shall apply an arbitrary and capricious standard of review, under which it will not reweigh the evidence or substitute its judgment for that of the Formal Review Panel, but will instead determine whether the prior decision lacked a rational basis, failed to consider relevant factors, relied on improper considerations, or otherwise constituted a clear error in judgment.

The BCRG may uphold, reduce, modify, or vacate sanctions, including tournament bans and probationary periods, and may issue written guidance or conditions tailored to the conduct at issue. The decision of the BCRG on appeal shall be final.

Nothing in these procedures shall preclude the referral of a matter to the Grievance and Disciplinary Committee where required by the USA Fencing Bylaws, the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee Bylaws, or where the BCRG determines that extraordinary circumstances warrant GDC review.

Except as otherwise required by the USA Fencing Bylaws or Section 9 of the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee Bylaws, there shall be no further appeals beyond the BCRG appeal process.

6.1 The BCRG shall appoint a Chair to oversee the administration and coordination of its review and appeal processes. The Chair shall be responsible for managing case flow,

facilitating timely reviews, coordinating communications, and drafting and modifying any standard operating procedures (SOP), as well as ensuring adherence to any SOP.

6.2 To be eligible for appointment as Chair, an individual must have served as a member of the BCRG for at least one full season prior to selection. This requirement is intended to ensure that the Chair possesses sufficient familiarity with the BCRG's procedures, including the end-to-end Review and Appeal process, the operational workflow, and the administrative and time commitments associated with the role.

6.3 The National Office through the Officials Coordinator shall play an active role in the selection of the Chair, given its close operational coordination with the position. In consultation with BCRG members, the National Office may help identify and recommend candidates who demonstrate consistent participation, reliability, and interest in the role. The BCRG shall consider any such recommendations but shall retain the authority to appoint a candidate for chair.

6.4 The Chair shall be appointed or reconfirmed at the start of each competitive season to account for potential turnover and to ensure continued engagement and effectiveness in the role.

7. Annual Review and Policy Updates

The BCRG will convene at least annually to review all black cards issued and rescinded during the preceding period, evaluate the effectiveness of procedures, and recommend policy updates or workflow changes to ensure continued compliance and effectiveness.

8. Administration and Effective Date

The National Office is the steward of this policy's administration, including notifications, records management, and publication of updates. This policy becomes effective on the Effective Date listed above and applies to all black cards issued on or after that date. For black cards issued prior to the Effective Date, the BCRG may apply this policy or prior policy, as appropriate, to ensure fairness and consistency, with any approach documented in the case record.

9. Contact

Questions regarding this policy or its implementation should be directed to the National Office at [contact email to be determined] and to the BCRG Chair at **blackcard@usafencing.org**.