



## ATHLETE HANDBOOK

### U.S. PARALYMPICS TRACK & FIELD

#### ABOUT PARA TRACK & FIELD

Athletics events have been a part of the Paralympic program since 1960 when the first Paralympic Games were held in Rome, Italy. Athletics is the and is the largest sport within the Paralympic Movement in terms of participating athletes and countries. Events include track, throwing, jumping and marathon.

The rules of Paralympic Track & Field are nearly identical to Olympic Track & Field, with allowances being made to accommodate certain disabilities.

Paralympic Track and Field competition is open to male and female athletes with physical disabilities such as dwarfism, amputation/limb loss, blindness/visual impairment, spinal cord injury/wheelchair-users, cerebral palsy/brain injury/stroke and intellectual impairments (autism). Depending on the level of visual impairment, a runner may compete with guide runners, who are attached at the wrist with a tether to the runner. More information on IPC rules can be found by visiting the [IPC Athletics Rules Website](#).

Today, World Para Athletics (WPA), under the governance of the International Paralympic Committee (IPC), acts as the international federation for the sport of Para Track and Field and is based in Bonn, Germany.

#### WHAT IS CLASSIFICATION?

Classification provides a structure for Paralympic competition. Classification:

1. Defines who is eligible to compete in Para sport, and
2. Groups eligible athletes into sport classes according to their functional ability

Classification systems are defined and implemented by the respective international federation for each sport. Sport class criteria and parameters are defined and put in place by each sport's international federation (IF) with the aim of minimizing the impact of impairment and to ensure that winning is determined by skill, fitness, power, endurance, tactical ability and mental focus, etc., the same factors that account for success in sport for all athletes. Sport-specific sport class profiles and classification information can be found in the classification rules and regulations, which can be found on the respective sport's IF's website.

#### HOW CAN I OBTAIN A CLASSIFICATION?

**National Classification for athletes with physical impairments** - Athletes who have an eligible impairment should register for a competition that is hosting national classification. [National Classification Opportunities for Para Track & Field](#).

Once an athlete is registered for the competition that offers national physical impairment classification opportunities the athlete must submit a [National Medical Diagnostics Form](#). Based on the submitted paperwork, and after U.S. Paralympics Track & Field has confirmed the athlete has an eligible classification, the athlete will be placed on the national classification schedule for that competition. Classification is usually held 1-2 days prior to the start of the competition. Most athletes will need to go through a medical assessment and a technical assessment before receiving their national classification. Athletes with physical impairments may also be looked at by classifiers during the competition before a final classification can be given.

**National classification for athletes with visual impairments** - Athletes with visual impairments (VI) must fill out a visual impairment diagnostic form ([National Medical Diagnostics Form](#)) at least four weeks



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prior to the start of their first competition. Athletes with a visual impairment may obtain a national classification at any point during the year. Their classification is not necessarily associated with an event but should be completed prior to competing in a competition. The athlete must have the form filled out by their ophthalmologist and include any required testing.

**National Classification for athletes with intellectual impairments** - Athletes with an intellectual impairment (II) can receive a national classification at any point during the year. Their classification must be completed prior to the competition and can take a minimum of two weeks to complete. All national classifications for athletes with intellectual impairments are completed through Athletes without Limits. More information on classification for athletes with Intellectual Impairments on the Athletes Without Limit webpage. <https://www.athleteswithoutlimits.org/>

**Non-U.S. citizens** - U.S. Paralympics Track & Field is only able to formally classify U.S. citizens. If you are an international athlete living and training in the U.S. and do not have an international classification through WPA, contact us at [npcusaclassification@usopc.org](mailto:npcusaclassification@usopc.org) to find out your options.

#### NATIONAL CLASSIFICATION

All national classifications conducted domestically falls under the governance of U.S. Paralympics, who serves as the National Paralympic Committee (NPC) for the United States. For more information about the national classification policies and procedures, please visit the [U.S. Paralympics Classification Policies and Procedures Webpage](#).

#### INTERNATIONAL CLASSIFICATION

Athletes who wish to compete at World Para Athletics major competitions including World Championships, Parapan American Games and the Paralympic Games, must have an international classification. Once an athlete has an international classification their national classification will no longer be valid. All international classifications are completed at approved competitions through World Para Athletics including Grand Prix competitions, Parapan American Games and Junior and Senior World Championships.

Athletes are not able to obtain an international classification at a Paralympic Games.

International classification is not guaranteed for all athletes due to limited availability of international classification appointments. The U.S. is usually limited to one international classification opportunity in the United States each year. Within this one opportunity there may be an opportunity for 20-25 athletes to be internationally classified. Athletes are prioritized for international classification appointments based on their National Team status and/or athlete performances after the submission process that each athlete must complete to be considered for international classification.

#### NON-ELIGIBLE VS. ELIGIBLE IMPAIRMENTS

[The International Paralympic Committee \(IPC\) standard for eligible impairments](#) outline what impairments are eligible for Paralympic Sport. The IPC also determines what impairments are not eligible for Paralympic Sport. These non-eligible impairments include, but are not limited to the following;

- Pain
- Hearing Impairment
- Low muscle tone
- Hypermobility of joints



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- Joint instability
- Impaired motor reflex functions
- Impaired muscle endurance
- Impaired respiratory functions
- Tics and mannerisms, stereotypes and motor perseveration

World Para Athletics dictates which of the IPC's eligible impairments are eligible for participation in Para Track & Field. There are ten eligible impairments as identified by World Para Athletics. Athletes who have a permanent disability in one of these impairment categories may be eligible to compete in Para Track & Field. Medical paperwork and a national or international classification will be required to determine if an athlete has met the minimum impairment criteria to be eligible to participate in Para Track & Field.

- Impaired Muscle Power
- Impaired Passive Range of Movement
- Limb Deficiency
- Leg Length Difference
- Short Stature
- Athetosis
- Ataxia
- Hypertonia
- Visual Impairment
- Intellectual Impairment

You can find additional information on each impairment type at the following link:

<https://www.paralympic.org/athletics/classification>

#### INTELLECTUAL IMPAIRMENT

Athletes with an intellectual impairment must have a full-scale IQ score of 75 or lower, significant limitations in adaptive behavior and onset before the age of 18. Athletes who are eligible may compete in the 400m, 1500m, Long Jump and Shotput currently. In the U.S. all national classification is handled through Athletes Without Limits. You can find additional information at the following link: <https://www.athleteswithoutlimits.org/>

Athletes with an intellectual impairment who wish to compete at the international level must also go through international classification through World Para Athletics. Prior to being approved for international classification all athletes must have a national classification through Athletes Without Limits.

#### EVENTS BY CLASSIFICATION

World Para Athletics determines what events will be contested at each Paralympic Games. For the purpose of Paralympic Games, Parapan American Games, World Championships, U.S. Paralympics Trials, National Championships and Grand Prix competitions athletes may only compete in events they are eligible for by classification. Some domestic level events may allow athletes to compete in other events for their classification that are not contested at the World Para Athletics level at their local competition.

Athletes can find eligible events by classification in the [Athlete Sport & Program Plan](#).

#### WPA ATHLETE LICENSE

All athletes who wish to have their results recognized must first have a WPA Athlete License. Athletes must submit paperwork which will vary based on whether an athlete has a physical, visual or intellectual impairment.



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Licenses are only valid between January 1 - December 31. Athletes who are at or above 85% of the National Team A standard are encouraged to get their license. [Click for more information on WPA Athlete Licensing.](#)

An athlete must be at least 14 years of age during the year of competition to be eligible for a WPA license, international classification, and international competition.

#### MAJOR COMPETITIONS

Grand Prix competitions are scheduled every year and select years additional competitions such as World Championships, Jr. World Championships, Parapan Am Games, and the Paralympic Games are included.

There are anywhere from six to eight Grand Prix competitions hosted every year. Grand Prix competitions are the only opportunity for athletes to be internationally classified. Athletes are expected to cover all expenses for these events unless invited by US Paralympics Track & Field.

Every two years there is a World Championship and Junior World Championship. Every four years there are a Parapan American Games held in the same city as our Olympic counterparts.

The Paralympic Games are held once every four years following the closing of the Olympic Games. Team selection takes place at a Trials event that same year where athletes may qualify for the Team. There is a Minimum Entry Standard to enter Trials that every athlete must be familiar with prior to the season starting. [Minimum Entry Standards may be found in the Athlete Sport & Program Plan.](#)

#### TEAM SELECTIONS

In order to compete at the Paralympic Games, World Championships, Junior World Championships, or Parapan Am Games, an athlete must qualify for the Team at the selection competition event. These competitions will either be National Championships or Trials if it's a Paralympic Games year. All selection competition events have a minimum entry standard that an athlete must obtain before entering. Selection events are held in the same year of the competition the team is being selected for.

[Selection procedures for U.S. Paralympics Track & Field competitions.](#)

#### HOW CAN I BECOME A PARALYMPIAN?

Becoming a Paralympian is a long journey that many athletes around the world strive to achieve. It requires many years of training and high-level performances to qualify for the U.S. Paralympics Team.

The first step in the Paralympic journey is to identify a coach in your area who will not only work with you on the track or field but who is willing to educate themselves in the Paralympic Movement in order to understand when and where you need to be competing. Identifying a coach who can teach you proper mechanics is essential for success on the track or in the field.

Once a coach has been identified and provided consistent training, finding an opportunity to get classified becomes the next priority. There are many national classification opportunities throughout the year and around the country. Consistent marks at various meets, that place you at the 85% or higher in the ranking, will allow for potential placement on the international classification list at a U.S. competition. International classification is required in order to compete in Grand Prix's or Trials events.

You do not need to be internationally classified to compete in Para Track & Field domestically. Once you obtain results 85% of the National A standard, you should begin to look at getting internationally classified.

In order to make the Paralympic Track & Field Team, an athlete must compete at the Paralympic Trials event held once a quad usually a few months before the Paralympic Games. Performances are taken from that event to make up the Paralympic Team.



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There is also a component of athlete education that it takes in order to become a Paralympian. Athletes must understand the competitive landscape within their classification and event. It's important to know the standards to make trials or the national team in each event.

It's also very important to compete regularly as an athlete. Elite athletes tend to compete 6-8 times a season, from March to August. Going across the world isn't necessary to have a good performance so it's important to educate yourself on where there are World Para Athletics (WPA) approved meets in your area or around the country. [Find approved World Para Athletics \(WPA\) competitions.](#)

Competing at your local high school, collegiate, USATF or Move United meets, are all very important opportunities for improving your performance.

#### ATHLETE BENEFITS

Athletes who are named to the Paralympic Track & Field National Team are eligible for a variety of benefits which may include competition apparel, funding and access to funded camps and competitions, health insurance and grants. Athletes not on the National Team but who are in the pipeline or have hit the emerging standards, may also have opportunities to access grants, or receive support to attend competitions or camps. There are limited opportunities and benefits for athletes not on the National Team each year as well which may include access to funded camps, competitions and grants. Athlete benefits may change each year and can be found in the Athlete Sport & Program Plan. [U.S. Paralympics Track & Field Athlete Sport & Program Plan.](#)

#### RESIDENT AND ROTATION PROGRAM

The primary objective of the Resident and Rotation Program at the Chula Vista Elite Athlete Training Center (Training Center) is to provide an environment of high performance for athletes to grow athletically and personally as Paralympic hopefuls. The initial qualification standards, as well as the program requirements and expectations are provided within this application and will be supplemented through information provided to you from U.S. Paralympics Track & Field and the USOPC staff. Athletes will be evaluated for eligibility based on the information submitted, as well as their performance, their ability to sustain a productive training and competition schedule, and their ability to thrive within the environment at the training center. Access to the training center is a privilege that has proven to support athlete podium pursuits and sustainable independence. Initiative and collaboration with staff and coaches are very important aspects of success at the training center.

The Resident and Rotation program is based in Chula Vista, CA at the Chula Vista Elite Athlete Training Center. [View the Chula Vista Elite Athlete Training Center facilities.](#)

If you have any questions, please contact Sherrice Fox at [USParaTFInfo@usopc.org](mailto:USParaTFInfo@usopc.org).

#### SPORT AND PROGRAM PLAN

As an athlete becomes more familiar with the Paralympic Movement and more specifically Para Track & Field, they may start to have more in depth questions relating to classification standards, National Team criteria, athlete/coaching payments, Trials qualification, etc.

All of that information can be found in our [Athlete Sport and Program Plan](#). This document is updated annually and will be posted every January.

#### EVENT AND CLASSIFICATION STANDARDS

Every year U.S. Paralympics Track & Field will release a National Team A and National Team B standard. The standards are created to set criteria for qualification for various Team selections. The standards below are how to qualify for the National Team:

- National Team A Standard: Best third-place performance (mark or time) from the previous year according to the World Para Athletics World Ranking List.



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- National Team B Standard: Best fifth-place performance (mark or time) from the previous year according to the World Para Athletics World Ranking List.

In order to compete at a National Championships or Trials event, each athlete must hit a minimum entry standard to enter the event. The minimum entry standards can be found in the [Athlete Sport and Program Plan](#) in the final column on attachment A.

#### HOW DO I FIND EQUIPMENT?

Finding equipment will vary depending on location. Athletes are encouraged to first reach out to their local adaptive sports club as they are a good initial source for finding loan equipment. There are also organizations who offer a variety of grants that may assist with funding.

Challenged Athletes Foundation is an organization that helps athletes get involved in sport with funding through grants, equipment opportunities, or education. [Challenged Athletes Foundation](#)

Please see Appendix A of this document for further information on a variety of sports equipment and/or training grants.

#### HOW TO FIND A COMPETITION

All World Para Athletics (WPA) Approved events can be found by visiting the [IPC Athletics Competition Calendar](#).

Athletes who hold a current IPC Athletics License must compete at a WPA approved competition for results to count the WPA ranking list(s), WPA world and regional record applications, U.S. Paralympics Track & Field National Team status and WPA international competition qualification (i.e., Parapan American Games, world championships, Paralympic Games, etc.).

To get a competition approved, please use the links below by competition type:

- World Para Athletics Approved Events (meets that include able body participants)
  - [Fill out the World Para Athletics event approval form](#).
  - All requests must be submitted 4 weeks prior
- WPA International/National Competition Guidelines and Application (Para only meet)
  - Contact the Para Track & Field Offices to inquire about the application ([USParaTFInfo@usopc.org](mailto:USParaTFInfo@usopc.org))
  - Applications must be submitted four months prior to the competition starting date

Another great resource to find a competition is through Move United. Move United keeps an up-to-date calendar of Para Track & Field events happening around the country, including Regional competitions and Jr. Nationals. Please visit the website for more information about [Move United and their events](#).

#### HIGH SCHOOL RESOURCES

Many high school students are looking for opportunities to compete with their peers in high school sports. We encourage athletes to get involved in their high school sport programs as an athlete with a disability even if there are not adaptive sport opportunities available. Inclusive opportunities such as joining a high school track and field, or swim team are highly recommended.

Please visit the website to get connected with more [High School Resources](#).

#### COLLEGIATE RESOURCES

Collegiate athletics are critical to Team USA's success. Paralympic-eligible athletes are competing in a variety of programs in collegiate programs at all levels from Division I to Division III. Collegiate programs and opportunities





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for Para athletes are on the rise and continue to be a focus for our athletes to train and receive a post-secondary education.

We encourage you to review the resources below that will guide you in learning more about the collegiate space for athletes with disabilities. You can explore information on the collegiate campaign, [Paralympians Made Here](#). View NGB/HPMO collegiate sport resources, a list of adaptive collegiate sport programs across the United States and learn where our National Team and Paralympians have trained and competed at collegiately!

For more information, please visit our [Collegiate Resources](#) webpage.

#### MILITARY RESOURCES

Launched by the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee in 2004, the Paralympic Military Program uses Paralympic sport opportunities to support wounded, ill and injured American service members and veterans, including those with amputations, traumatic brain injuries and visual impairments. Through camps and clinics held year-round across the country, service members and veterans are introduced to Paralympic sport techniques and opportunities, including local and regional competitions, and are also connected to ongoing Paralympic sport programs in their communities.

For more information, please visit our [Military and Veterans](#) webpage.

#### USPTF STAFF BREAKDOWN

The U.S. Paralympics Track & Field staffing department is made up of four full time staff members. Sherrice Fox is the Director of the Para Track & Field Program who oversees the High Performance Planning and general direction of the program/development. Tanner Warmoth is the Manager of the Paralympic Track and Field program and handles logistics, high performance assistance, liaison with National Team Coaches, and development initiatives. Joaquim Cruz is the Resident Team Head Coach and serves as the National Team Head Coach on Team trips. Kris Mack is the National Team Development Coach. Sherrice and Tanner are located in Colorado Springs, CO while Joaquim and Kris are with our resident program in Chula Vista, CA.

- Sherrice Fox: Director, U.S. Paralympics Track & Field – [Sherrice.Fox@usopc.org](mailto:Sherrice.Fox@usopc.org)
- Tanner Warmoth: Manager, U.S. Paralympics Track & Field– [Tanner.Warmoth@usopc.org](mailto:Tanner.Warmoth@usopc.org)
- Joaquim Cruz: Senior Coach, U.S. Paralympics Track & Field – [UsParaTFInfo@usopc.org](mailto:UsParaTFInfo@usopc.org)
- Kris Mack: Coach National Team Development, U.S. Paralympics Track & Field – [UsParaTFInfo@usopc.org](mailto:UsParaTFInfo@usopc.org)

In addition to the full-time staff, U.S. Paralympics Track & Field hires contractors for specialist roles and events. If you are unsure of who to contact, please email [UsParaTFInfo@usopc.org](mailto:UsParaTFInfo@usopc.org) and we will make sure it gets to the correct staff member.

#### CAMPS/DEVELOPMENT

Throughout each year, U.S. Paralympics Track & Field hosts a variety of camps ranging from Development, National Team, event specific, or a focus on guides. All camps are held at Chula Vista, CA at the training center and participation is by invite only. While the objective of each camp may differ depending on the camp type, the primary objective of all our camps is to provide an environment of high performance for athletes to grow athletically and personally as Paralympic hopefuls. In reference to the Athlete Development Pathway, camp invitations usually begin for Emerging Level athletes pending resources and camp slots. Currently, we host about five camps during the year:

- Warm Weather Camp – designed for athletes who live in colder areas
- Throws Camp – focused on athletes who participate in throwing events
- Sprint/Power Camp – focused on athletes who participate in sprint events
- High Performance Camp – designed for athletes to fine tune skills right before Trials



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Athletes are considered for these camps in a variety of ways. Development camps are usually focused on a certain classification, age group, event type, etc. Development camp applications will be sent out via our USPTF Newsletter when available.

#### **ANTI-DOPING**

All competing athletes regardless of age and level must follow rules set forth by the United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA). Athletes can find information regarding the banned substance list and therapeutic use exemptions (TUE's) on [USADA's website](#). Several events in the U.S. will feature doping control officers who will randomly select and test athletes. All athletes are encouraged to review the Anti-Doping 101 video on the USADA website. [USADA Athlete Guide Anti-Doping](#)





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## Appendix A

### Funding Opportunities for Sports Equipment

#### Challenge Athletes Foundation (CAF)

Website: <https://www.challengedathletes.org/programs/grants/>

- Grant application open from September to November
- Grants are awarded in April
- Open to any customer for any type of product

#### Athletes Helping Athletes (AHA)

Website: <https://www.roadrunnersports.com/rrs/content/content.jsp?contentId=2400098>

- Grant applications always accepted
- Grant for children only
- Grants for handcycles
- They have grant money to give right now and no one to give it to

#### Kelly Brush Foundation

Website: <https://kellybrushfoundation.org/theactivefund/>

- Application Open in February

#### K2 Adventures

Website: <https://k2adventures.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/K2AF-Application-2019.pdf>

- There's no age limit but, in most cases, awards are limited to a maximum of \$5,000 so that they can help as many people as possible. Award applications are reviewed quarterly by their Award Committee. Every applicant receives a letter advising whether they've been approved or not selected.

#### Move United

Website: <https://www.moveunitedsport.org/sports/adaptive-sports/adaptive-sports-resources/>

- Many resources for clubs and equipment

#### National Association of Injured and Disabled Workers (NAIDW)

- Takes applications between June 30th and December 31st
- Telephone: 888.788.NAIDW(6243)

#### I'm Able Foundation

Website: <https://imablefoundation.org/grant-application/>

- IM ABLE Grants are awarded to disabled individuals residing in the Mid-Atlantic region

#### Team Possibilities

Website: <https://teampossibilities.org/grants-scholarships/>

- Applications accepted June 1st to August 31<sup>st</sup>

#### Wheelchairs for Kids

Website: <http://wheelchairs4kids.org/about/whatwedo/>

#### Triumph Foundation

Website: <https://triumph-foundation.org/outreach/grants-and-equipment/>

- Max grant is \$2000
- Applications are available upon request by email [info@Triumph-Foundation.org](mailto:info@Triumph-Foundation.org).



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#### **High Five Foundation**

Website(s): <https://highfivesfoundation.org/grant-application/>

- The High Fives Foundation offers four (quarterly) grant-funding periods:
- January – Open to wounded veterans and those injured in the outdoor action sports community.

#### **Sportsabilities**

Website: <http://www.sportsabilities.com/granting-organizations>

#### **Catapult**

Website: <https://www.teamcatapult.org/grant-program/>

- Opens in the Spring