

# 2026 Para Athlete Support Criteria

Below you will find information about financial and other support offered by both USA Fencing and the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC). You are always welcome to reach out to USA Fencing with questions at any time. The best way to reach us is at [international@usafencing.org](mailto:international@usafencing.org).

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## USA Fencing Travel Funding

USA Fencing provides financial support para-fencing national team athletes to travel to designated international competitions and training camps. Please note the support described below is only for January 1, 2026-July 31, 2026.

## Athlete Stipends

Athlete stipends are paid by the USOPC and are based on an athlete's final placement result in a Paralympic eligible event at any World Abilitysport Para Fencing World Cup within the calendar year. Athletes must meet the following finishing placement criteria. Results from team events are not eligible.

### Event field with thirty (30) or more athletes:

Top-4 and top-50% - \$2,000 per event

Top-8 and top-50% - \$1,500 per event

Top-16 and top-50% - \$1,000 per event

### Event field and with ten (10) to twenty-nine (29) athletes:

Top-4 and top-40% - \$2,000 per event

Top-8 and top-40% - \$1,500 per event

Top-16 and top-40% - \$1,000 per event

## EAHI Criteria

USA Fencing has been allocated 8 EAHI slots for 2026. USA Fencing will have two offer periods in the 2025-2026 season. Starting January 1st, 2026 (Period 1), USA Fencing's 8 EAHI slots will be offered to eligible athletes meeting the criteria below. A second offer period starting October 1st, 2026 (Period 2), will be coordinated to offer any unused EAHI slots per the criteria below:

### Period 1 – January 1st, 2026

- Athletes named to the 2025 World Championships
- Athletes named in the Top-20 and Top-Half of World Para Fencing International Rankings as of December 31st, 2025



#### Period 2 – October 1st, 2026

- Athletes named in the Top-20 and Top-Half of World Para Fencing International Rankings as of September 30th, 2026

EAHI slots are initially reserved for allocation within the Parafencing event categories per the following table. Of the 8 available EAHI slots, a maximum of 4 slots may be allocated to each gender:

Category	Slots
Women's Category A	2
Women's Category B	2
Men's Category A	2
Men's Category B	2

EAHI slots will be offered to athletes meeting the Team USA Athlete definition in the order of international ranking (<https://iwas.ophardt.online/en/search/rankings/1>) and based on the average of all weapons an athlete is ranked within. For example, if an athlete is ranked 12th in Women's Foil Category A and 16th in Women's Epee Category A, their average ranking position would be 14th, as expressed in the following equation:  $(12+16)/2 = 14$ th average ranking position.

If there is not eligible Category B athletes to be offered an EAHI slot, that available slot will be offered to the next eligible Category A athlete from the same gender as applicable. Once an EAHI slot has been offered to an athlete, if declined, it will not roll down to the next eligible athlete.

## Operation Gold Payments

Operation Gold Payments are paid by the USOPC for top performances at the most important Senior event of the year.

There is no 2026 Paralympic Operation Gold qualifying event for USA Fencing.

In an Olympic and Paralympic Games year, teams and individuals must place in the top-three at the Olympic and Paralympic Games to qualify for an Operation Gold Event Award; multiple Operation Gold Event Awards can be received if an athlete has multiple top-three finishes at the Olympic or Paralympic Games.



In non-Olympic and non-Paralympic Games years, Operation Gold Awards are limited to one award per athlete in the Term; athletes who qualify for more than one award automatically receive the higher award.

## Athlete Disbursements

- *USA Fencing/Athlete Relationship.* Each athlete recipient will be required to execute an agreement with the USOPC and may be required to also sign an agreement with USA Fencing. USA Fencing understands that the USOPC (i) is not a party to any agreement entered into between the USA Fencing and athlete, (ii) has no obligations thereunder, and (iii) nor can it be held liable under any such agreement. Athletes receiving Athlete Stipends or EAHF are not intended third party beneficiaries of this Funding Schedule.
- *Advance Notice.* USA Fencing must provide athletes with advance notice of any material changes in eligibility and performance criteria to Athlete Stipends and EAHF. Additionally, USA Fencing must provide notice to athletes that changes to eligibility and performance criteria in Athlete Stipends and EAHF can be subject to change at any time. USA Fencing understands that athletes are not third-party beneficiaries of this Funding Schedule and any dispute between USA Fencing and an athlete regarding changes to Athlete Stipends or EAHF, which may be contained in a USA Fencing's athlete agreement or other USA Fencing notification, will solely be resolved between the USA Fencing and athlete.
- *Pregnancy.* An athlete who meets her USA Fencing's and/or Athlete Stipend eligibility criteria in effect as of the date of notification to the USOPC of her pregnancy will continue to receive EAHF and/or the same amount of qualified USOPC Athlete Stipends for the duration of the pregnancy plus an additional one-year period from the date of birth of the child or end of pregnancy, provided the athlete agrees that it is her intent to return to competition at an elite level and has fully complied with the Pregnancy Support Terms and Conditions. If the athlete re-qualifies for Athlete Stipends at any point during pregnancy or within the year after the end of her pregnancy, the USOPC will honor the higher amount for which she qualified. Receipt of these benefits shall not be conditioned upon any agreement that the athlete must continue to train during pregnancy or for the one-year period subsequent to pregnancy. Upon the conclusion of the one-year period,



the athlete will then have to re-qualify for EAH and/or Athlete Stipends. USA Fencing will be required to keep this status confidential and cannot discriminate or retaliate against the athlete for being pregnant.

- *U.S. Center for SafeSport.* USA Fencing will ensure that all applicable individuals receiving these funds/benefits are in compliance with the mandatory training requirements of the U.S. Center for SafeSport, and the requirements of the USOPC's Responsible Sport Organization Background Check Policy. In accordance with the USOPC's NGB Athlete Safety Policy, USA Fencing will notify the USOPC's Security and Athlete Safety Office via email at [athlete.safety@usopc.org](mailto:athlete.safety@usopc.org) as soon as possible, and in any case within 24 hours of imposing its own or being notified of Center-imposed sanction(s) and/or temporary measure(s), affecting any of the individuals receiving these funds/benefits
- *NCAA.* When applicable, USA Fencing must notify NCAA student-athletes and prospective NCAA student-athletes that they should consult with their school's NCAA compliance administrator to ensure compliance with NCAA regulations related to accepting Athlete Support to include monthly stipends, incentive/bonus payments or other grants without jeopardizing their eligibility. Similarly, USA Fencing should encourage Grade, Middle and High School students to consult with their respective state's High School Federation to determine whether accepting Athlete Support affects their High School sport eligibility. It is the athlete's responsibility to ensure compliance with NCAA and/or State High School Federation rules and regulations as applicable.
- *Athlete Stipends.* If the full athlete stipend amount will not be disbursed by the end of the calendar year, the USOPC may reallocate at its discretion.
- *Operation Gold.* Any supplementary funds for the USOPC Operation Gold Event will be distributed by USA Fencing to qualified athletes. Details will be outlined and communicated to athletes through USA Fencing's athlete agreement, to include payment criteria, award amounts and athlete eligibility term.