

USA WEIGHTLIFTING ATHLETE GENDER INCLUSION, COMPETITIVE EQUITY, AND ELIGIBILITY POLICY

**Policy Owner: USA Weightlifting Director of Sport Development
January 1, 2025***

Executive Summary

USA Weightlifting recognizes the importance of gender identity and expression regardless of sex assigned at birth and aims to provide athletes and participants of all ages and roles in our sport a safe and inclusive environment. This Athlete Gender Inclusion, Competitive Equity, and Eligibility Policy (“Policy”) is intended to balance competitive equity and inclusion.

The Policy applies to all athletes over the sport age of 17 years old who wish to compete in a competition category (e.g., Male or Female) different than their sex assigned at birth. Youth athletes (sport age under 18 years old) may compete in whatever competition category they identify with.

Athletes (over the sport age of 17) assigned female at birth who wish to compete in the Male competition category at Local and/or National Events must, before being declared eligible to compete in the Male competition category, satisfy the Competition Category Verification set forth in Section 6.

Athletes (over the sport age of 17) assigned male at birth who wish to compete in the Female competition category at Local Events must, before being declared eligible to compete in the Female competition category, satisfy the Competition Category Verification set forth in Section 6.

Athletes (over the sport age of 17) assigned male at birth who wish to compete in the Female competition category at National Events must, before being declared eligible to compete in the Female competition category: (1) satisfy the Competition Category Verification set forth in Section 6; and (2) satisfy the conditions set forth in Section 7 (“National Event Fairness Evaluation”). The National Event Fairness Evaluation will be conducted by an independent panel of medical experts appointed by USA Weightlifting, as described in Section 7.

The International Weightlifting Federation (“IWF”) has its own gender identity policy and rules. In those circumstances where selection to a team to compete in an IWF Event is based on a qualifying total or national/international ranking, athletes who would be subject to the IWF eligibility rules must, before being selected to the team by USA Weightlifting, have their eligibility to participate in that competition category in the IWF Event approved by the IWF.

This Executive Summary is for summary purposes only. The specific language of the Policy as written below shall apply to all specific cases. Please review the full Policy in detail and direct any questions you may have to inclusion@usaweightlifting.org.

*Policy effective date is January 1, 2025. However, requests for Competition Category Verification and/or National Event Fairness Evaluation under this Policy may be submitted to USAW immediately upon publication of this policy.

1. Introduction and Purpose

USA Weightlifting is committed to providing equal opportunity for all athletes and hopes that through the following policy all athletes will have the opportunity to compete without fear of discrimination or harassment. USA Weightlifting recognizes the importance of gender identity and expression regardless of sex assigned at birth and aims to provide athletes and participants of all ages and roles in our sport a safe and inclusive environment at what we will define as “Local” and “National” USA Weightlifting events. This Policy is not applicable to youth aged athletes.

USA Weightlifting recognizes that athletes may wish to compete in weightlifting in a category consistent with their gender identity. USA Weightlifting respects the dignity of all individuals, including athletes whose gender identity is different than their sex assigned at birth. It also wishes the sport of weightlifting to be as inclusive as possible, and to encourage and provide a clear path to participation in the sport for all. It therefore seeks to place conditions on such participation only to the extent necessary to deliver fair and meaningful competition conditions. This Policy exists solely to achieve the objectives set out above. In no way is it intended as any kind of judgment on, or questioning of, the gender identity of any athlete. On the contrary, the dignity and privacy of all athletes, regardless of their gender identity, must be respected and preserved, and therefore all cases arising under this Policy will be handled and resolved in a confidential manner.

Gender inclusion policies in sport typically attempt to balance three priorities: athlete safety, competitive equity, and inclusion. As a noncontact sport, athlete safety is not as significant a part of this balance in weightlifting as it is in contact sports. Competitive equity for cisgender women and the importance of inclusion for athletes whose gender identity is different from their sex assigned at birth are the most significant considerations in weightlifting in reaching a balance which is fair and inclusive.

In evaluating whether eligibility conditions, if any, should be applied to transgender athletes, particularly transgender women, seeking to compete in USA Weightlifting competitions, USA Weightlifting has considered the following three factors:

- (1) Physiological advantages resulting from a transgender woman having experienced any part, or all, of male puberty.

Weightlifting is a strength sport. Specifically, strength and explosive power are physical characteristics directly related to competitive success. Scientific literature indicates that these physical characteristics would, in general, be positively enhanced during male puberty. What is less clear in the literature is the extent to which these puberty-related physiological advantages can be eliminated, or mitigated, through surgery or prolonged hormonal therapy. Research in this area is ongoing.

- (2) Psychological advantages.

An athlete’s mental state is important in weightlifting as it is in all sports. The impact of male puberty on this factor is less clear. As a general proposition, USA Weightlifting does not believe that there is any difference between the competitive mental strength of men and women weightlifters. However, there is little dispute that the mental health of transgender athletes is potentially uniquely impacted by societal patterns of rejection, harassment, and exclusion.

(3) The level of competition impacted.

In striking a balance between competitive equity and inclusion at the local level of competition, the value of inclusion for the benefit of transgender individuals takes priority. When it comes to national- and international-level competitions, competitive equity will have more consideration.

In considering these factors in the balance between competitive equity and inclusion, USA Weightlifting has developed this Policy.

2. Definitions

As used in this Policy, the following terms are defined as follows:

Sex assigned at birth: The sex assigned to an individual at birth. Specifically, assigned male at birth (AMAB) or assigned female at birth (AFAB).

Nonbinary: Individuals who do not identify exclusively as either male or female.

IWF: International Weightlifting Federation.

Sport age: For each calendar year, the age the athlete will be on December 31 of that year.

Youth Athletes: Individuals with a sport age under 18 years old.

National Events: All weightlifting events in categories open to individuals over the sport age of 17 at USA Weightlifting National Championships, National Junior Championships, National Under 23 & Under 25 Championships, National University Championships, National Masters Championships, North American Open Series, North American Open Finals, and any other national competition sanctioned and operated by USA Weightlifting with a qualifying standard for entry and any other competitions designated by USA Weightlifting as a “National Event.” For the sake of clarity and for the purposes of this Policy, National Events include IWF Events, subject to Section 8. For application of this Policy, National Youth Championships is expressly omitted from this definition of National Events.

IWF Events: Any events where the IWF eligibility criteria apply including, but not limited to, the Olympic Games, Pan American Games, World Championships, Junior World Championships, Pan American Weightlifting Federation events, IWF world records, Pan American records, and any other IWF- or International Olympic Committee-sanctioned event.

Local Events: USA Weightlifting sanctioned competitions not listed as National Events above. This includes all Weightlifting State Organization (WSO) sanctioned events.

3. Application of this Policy

This Policy shall apply to any athlete member of USA Weightlifting who wishes to compete in a competition category (e.g., Male or Female) different than their sex assigned at birth. This includes, but is not limited to, athletes who are or were registered with USA Weightlifting in a competition category different than their sex assigned at birth before implementation of this Policy.

This Policy shall not apply to:

- Youth Athletes. Such athletes competing in USA Weightlifting National or Local events are allowed to compete in whatever competition category they identify with.
- Nonbinary individuals who intend to participate in the competition category congruent with their sex assigned at birth.

All athletes to whom this Policy applies shall promptly notify USA Weightlifting at inclusion@usaweightlifting.org of their desire to either change their competition category, compete in a category different than their sex assigned at birth, or that the athlete is joining USA Weightlifting and registering in a competition category different than their sex assigned at birth. This, and other personal information related to gender transition, information shall be kept confidential as provided in Section 11.

4. Female-to-Male Competition Category Change

Athletes assigned female at birth who wish to compete in the Male competition category at Local and/or National Events must, before being declared eligible to compete in the Male competition category, satisfy the Competition Category Verification set forth in Section 6 below.

5. Male-to-Female Competition Category Change

Athletes assigned male at birth who wish to compete in the Female competition category at **Local Events** must, before being declared eligible to compete in the Female competition category, satisfy the Competition Category Verification set forth in Section 6 below.

Athletes assigned male at birth who wish to compete in the Female competition category at **National Events** must, before being declared eligible to compete in the Female competition category:

- (a) Satisfy the Competition Category Verification set forth in Section 6 below; and
- (b) Satisfy the conditions set forth in Section 7 below (“National Event Fairness Evaluation”) if the athlete has a sport age of 18 or older.

6. Competition Category Verification

- (a) Purpose. The purpose of Competition Category Verification is to confirm that the athlete’s competition category change is bona fide.
- (b) Process. To initiate the Competition Category Verification process, an athlete must submit a Competition Category Verification Request (the “Request”) to USA Weightlifting at inclusion@usaweightlifting.org at least ninety (90) days prior to the start of the first Event in which the athlete seeks to compete in the requested competition category. USA Weightlifting may take any of the following actions:
 - i. Approve the Request;
 - ii. Deny the Request; or
 - iii. Seek additional information from the athlete prior to approving or denying the Request.

- (c) Return to Previous Competition Category. Once an athlete's Request has been approved, the athlete may not initiate the process to change back to a prior competition category for four years following the date the initial Request is approved.

7. National Event Fairness Evaluation

- (a) Purpose. The purpose of the National Event Fairness Evaluation process is to ensure that athletes competing in the Female competition category who were assigned male at birth do not have an unfair advantage over their cisgender Female competitors in National Events.
- (b) National Athlete/Event Fairness Application. To initiate the National Event Fairness Evaluation process, an athlete must submit a National Event Competition Category Application ("Application") to USA Weightlifting at inclusion@usaweightlifting.org at least ninety (90) days prior to the start of the first National Event in which the athlete seeks to compete in the Female competition category. USA Weightlifting shall submit the Application to a panel of independent medical experts (the "National Event Eligibility Panel") appointed by USA Weightlifting. USA Weightlifting will assign a staff person to serve as staff liaison to the National Event Eligibility Panel. The names and resumes of the independent medical experts will be sent to USA Weightlifting's Athletes' Advisory Council prior to appointment, for review and comment. In appointing National Event Eligibility Panel members, USA Weightlifting will give preference to medical experts with experience related to transgender health, the physical performance of transgender athletes relevant to weightlifting, and the effect of medical approaches in mitigating any pre-existing physical advantages.
- (c) Eligibility Criteria. As a condition of eligibility, the athlete must satisfy the National Event Eligibility Panel that, from a medical perspective, any competitive advantage the athlete may have over the athlete's cisgender Female competitors due to the prior physical development of the athlete as a Male has been minimized.
 - i. The athlete must demonstrate that the concentration of testosterone in the athlete's serum has been less than 2.5 nmol/L (as measured by liquid chromatography coupled with mass spectrometry) continuously for a period of at least three hundred sixty-five days (365) before the date of Application. This must include at a minimum three (3) separate blood tests within the past three hundred sixty-five days (365) days preceding the Application, with the last test conducted within ninety (90) days prior to the athlete's Application.
 - a. The Panel may make an exception from this criteria (7.(c).i.) if it finds that the athlete has a medical condition that limits the bioavailability of the athlete's free testosterone.
 - ii. The Panel may nevertheless deny the Application if the Panel finds, in the unique circumstances of the case, that, notwithstanding that the criteria in 7.(c).i. above have been satisfied, the athlete has a significant competitive advantage over the athlete's cisgender Female competitors due to the prior

physical development of the athlete as a Male. Per Section 7(f) below, USA Weightlifting will publish to its website any guidelines established by the Panel for the implementation of this evaluation of potential competitive advantage.

- (d) Panel Evaluation. In conducting its evaluation of an athlete's Application, the National Event Eligibility Panel shall consider the medical file, serum testosterone results, and other information submitted by the athlete. The Panel may also request additional information from the athlete or the athlete's treating physicians. The Panel may also direct additional testing. Per the International Olympic Committee Framework on Fairness, Inclusion and Non-Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity and Sex Variations (the "Framework"), the Panel will not request any of the prohibited testing as set forth in that Framework and will not request gynecological examinations or similar forms of invasive physical examinations, aimed at determining an athlete's sex, sex variations, or gender. The athlete must fully cooperate with the National Event Eligibility Panel in its evaluation efforts. The athlete will acknowledge that this evaluation process is complicated and agrees that neither USA Weightlifting nor members of the National Event Eligibility Panel shall be liable for any detriment caused the athlete by delays in the evaluation process. Any costs that the National Event Eligibility Panel incurs, or the athlete incurs at the request of the Panel, associated with this evaluation will be paid by USA Weightlifting.
- (e) Panel Decision. If the National Event Eligibility Panel decides to approve an athlete's Application, that decision and any conditions associated with that decision shall be communicated to the athlete by USA Weightlifting. In order to maintain eligibility, if the Application is approved, the athlete must keep their serum testosterone concentration below 2.5 nmol/L (unless the Panel has determined that for medical reasons this condition is not necessary and expressly vacates this requirement, *e.g.* the athlete has a medical condition which limits the bioavailability of the athlete's free testosterone), and comply with any other conditions of the Panel's approval for so long as the athlete wishes to compete in the Female competition category in National Events. The Panel shall also establish, as part of the conditions associated with its decision, the frequency with which the athlete must submit periodic reports demonstrating the athlete's compliance with the eligibility criteria and the Application's approval; such reports shall include serum testosterone results unless the 2.5nmol/L condition has been expressly vacated in the Panel's approval of the Application. If the Panel denies the Application then the reasons for that denial shall also be communicated to the athlete.
- i. The National Event Eligibility Panel may revoke or modify its approval of an athlete's Application based on subsequently acquired information.
 - ii. An athlete may not change their weightlifting competition category back to Male for purposes of National Events for a period of four years following the approval of the athlete's Application.
- (f) Guidelines. The National Event Eligibility Panel may establish guidelines for the implementation of the evaluation process. Such guidelines, if and when adopted, will be published to USA Weightlifting's website.

8. IWF Events

USA Weightlifting acknowledges that at the time of adoption of this Policy, the IWF has adopted its own Gender Identity Policy (“IWF Policy”). The IWF Policy is different from USA Weightlifting’s Policy.

For IWF Events, the following shall apply. In order for an athlete to participate in any IWF Event, the athlete must first satisfy the eligibility criteria set forth in the IWF Policy. In those circumstances where USA Weightlifting is to select athletes to compete in an IWF Event, athletes who would be subject to the IWF Policy must, before being selected to the team by USA Weightlifting, have their eligibility to participate in the relevant competition category in the IWF Event approved by the IWF pursuant to the IWF Policy.

9. Appeals

An applicant athlete who wishes to challenge the decision of the National Event Eligibility Panel with respect to that applicant athlete’s National Event Competition Category Application may appeal the decision by requesting a review hearing with the USA Weightlifting Competition Category Appeal Body (“Appeal Body”), which shall consist of a member of the USA Weightlifting Judicial Committee appointed by the Chair of the Judicial Committee, a National Athlete (as defined in the USA Weightlifting Bylaws) appointed by the Chair of the Judicial Committee, and a medical doctor appointed by the Chair of the Judicial Committee (with preference given to a medical doctor with experience related to transgender health, the physical performance of transgender athletes relevant to weightlifting, and the effect of medical approaches in mitigating any pre-existing physical advantages). The parties to the appeal shall be the applicant athlete and USA Weightlifting. No other person or entity shall have standing to challenge the decisions of the National Event Eligibility Panel or to participate as a party in any appeal. The Appeal Body shall be the exclusive forum for challenges to National Event Eligibility Panel decisions.

In any proceeding before the Appeal Body, the Eligibility Criteria and presumption established in Section 7(c) of this Policy shall not be subject to challenge or review. The applicant athlete may challenge only the application of the Eligibility Criteria to the applicant athlete’s individual circumstances. The decision of the Panel shall be upheld unless the Appeal Body finds that the applicant athlete has carried the burden of demonstrating that the Panel’s decision is arbitrary and capricious with no facts to support the decision. In a review hearing, the Appeal Body shall consider such witness testimony and/or other evidence that the Appeal Body considers relevant and appropriate. The Chair of the USA Weightlifting Judicial Committee may adopt appropriate rules of procedure for the Appeal Body subject to review and approval by USA Weightlifting and the USA Weightlifting Judicial Committee. The Appeal Body’s decision shall be final and binding on both USA Weightlifting and the applicant athlete. Nothing in this Section 9 shall be construed to limit the rights of members provided by the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act and the USOPC Bylaws.

10. Status Pending Approval

Pending a decision on an athlete’s Competition Category Verification or National Event Competition Category Application, or by the Appeal Body, as applicable, the athlete shall remain eligible to compete in the competition category consistent with their sex assigned at birth, subject to Section 13.

11. Confidentiality

All athlete information provided to USA Weightlifting under this Policy, and the results of examinations and assessments conducted under this Policy, will be dealt with in strict confidence and applicable privacy laws. Such information will not be used for any purpose not contemplated in this Policy and will not be disclosed to any third party unless that disclosure is necessary for the effective application and enforcement of this Policy or is required by law. USA Weightlifting shall not publicly comment on individual Requests, Applications, or decisions under this Policy except, in its discretion, it may do so in response to public comments attributed to the athlete or the athlete's representatives.

12. Other Eligibility Requirements Not Affected

The application of this Policy shall not affect eligibility requirements or rules otherwise set out in the USA Weightlifting Bylaws, or other USA Weightlifting rules, policies, or procedures.

13. Compliance with Anti-Doping Rules

Nothing in this Policy shall affect an athlete's obligation to fully comply with the Anti-Doping Rules of the United States Anti-Doping Agency ("USADA"), the World Anti-Doping Agency, the USOPC, IWF, USA Weightlifting, or the organizer of an event in which the athlete competes. If the use of a substance on the World Anti-Doping Agency Prohibited List is contemplated in connection with a gender transition, then the athlete must obtain a Therapeutic Use Exemption from USADA. (Note, however, that the use by an athlete of a substance on the WADA Prohibited List may result in the athlete no longer being eligible to compete in their current competition category, and/or may affect the athlete's ability to revert to their prior competition category at a later time).

Further, an athlete who was assigned female at birth, and who has used or is using testosterone as part of a gender identity transition (with or without a Therapeutic Use Exemption) will not be allowed to compete in the Female category for four years following the athlete's last use of testosterone.

14. Discrimination Prohibited

All USA Weightlifting members, including its athlete members, have a right to participate in the activities of USA Weightlifting without being subjected to harassment or discrimination regarding their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or transition to a different competition category. Any USA Weightlifting member who engages in conduct which violates this right shall be subject to discipline pursuant to USA Weightlifting's rules and regulations, including its Grievance Policy.

Organizational members of USA Weightlifting, including but not limited to clubs and Weightlifting State Organizations, are required to allow athletes to compete in the competition category for which that athlete is approved in connection with their USA Weightlifting membership. Failure to do so will result in discipline, pursuant to USA Weightlifting's rules and regulations, including its Grievance Policy, of the organizational member and/or any individual member who directly caused the violation.

15. Membership Requirement

For an athlete to submit a Competition Category Verification Request and/or National Event Competition Category Application, the athlete must be an athlete member (in good standing) of USA Weightlifting.

16. Noncompliance by Athlete

If an athlete is found to be registering for or participating in a USA Weightlifting-sanctioned event without following the protocols set forth in this Policy, USA Weightlifting reserves the right to immediately remove the athlete from the applicable event and/or vacate the athlete's results from the event if they have competed, and may take further disciplinary action pursuant to USA Weightlifting's rules and regulations, including its Grievance Policy.

17. Assistance With This Policy

USA Weightlifting is committed to the inclusion of all athletes in the sport of weightlifting subject to the eligibility requirements set forth in this Policy. Any person seeking information on the application of this Policy should contact USA Weightlifting at inclusion@usaweightlifting.org.

18. Athlete Agreement, Consent and Release

By submitting a Competition Category Verification Request or National Event Competition Category Application, an athlete represents and agrees that:

- (a) All information submitted in connection with the Request or Application is accurate and complete to the best of their knowledge and no relevant information has been intentionally withheld.
- (b) The athlete will fully cooperate with and provide any additional information requested by USA Weightlifting or the National Event Eligibility Panel.
- (c) In connection with the National Event Eligibility Panel's evaluation of the athlete's Application, or for the continuing monitoring of the athlete if that Application is approved:
 - i. To provide medical waivers and releases allowing the athlete's physicians to share records with the Panel.
 - ii. To comply with any conditions imposed by the Panel as a condition of its approval of the athlete's Application.
 - iii. To undergo any additional medical testing required by the Panel in connection with its evaluation of the athlete's Application, or ongoing status if the Application is approved. Per the International Olympic Committee Framework on Fairness, Inclusion and Non-Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity and Sex Variations (the "Framework"), the Panel will not request any of the prohibited testing as set forth in that Framework and will not request gynecological examinations or similar forms of invasive physical examinations, aimed at determining an athlete's sex, sex variations,

- or gender. The cost of any such testing will be at USA Weightlifting's expense.
- iv. To advance notice, or no advance notice, blood sample collection to evaluate the athlete's serum testosterone level. The cost of any such testing will be at USA Weightlifting's expense.
 - v. Any blood sample collected in connection with an anti-doping control may also be used for such purpose.
- (c) The athlete agrees that neither USA Weightlifting, nor any member of the National Event Eligibility Panel, nor any of USA Weightlifting's employees, directors, officers, agents, representatives, or volunteers, nor any other persons involved in the administration of this Policy, shall be liable in any way in relation to acts done or omitted to be done in good faith in connection with the administration of this Policy.

Revision #	Revision Approval Date	Effective Date of Revision	Revision Approver	Description of Revision
V.1.	8/27/2024	1/1/2025	CEO & Board	New policy. Replaces the USA Weightlifting Policy for Transgender Inclusion.