



KARATE



USA KARATE REFEREE POLICY

APPROVED

Effective September 1, 2026

USA KARATE

REFEREE POLICY

Member, United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee

Approval	Board Approved
Effective Date	September 1, 2026
Supersedes	Policy effective January 1, 2026
Status	Approved

SECTION 1. USA KARATE NATIONAL REFEREE PROGRAM

Section 1.1. Program Status and Authority

The USA Karate National Referee Program is an operational program of USA Karate and is not a standing committee. The program operates under the authority of the Chief Executive Officer and Director of Sport and is led by the Chief Referee.

Nothing in this policy supersedes the authority of the USA Karate Board of Directors under the USA Karate Bylaws or other governing documents.

Section 1.2. Vision

To be a nationally and internationally respected leader in sports officiating through fairness, consistency, professionalism, and excellence.

Section 1.3. Values

The USA Karate National Referee Program is guided by USA Karate's organizational core values:

- a. Professionalism;
- b. Pursuit of Excellence;
- c. Integrity & Transparency;
- d. Growth; and
- e. Community.

Additional core values specific to the National Referee Program are:

- a. Fairness;
- b. Accountability;
- c. Consistency; and
- d. Respect.

Section 1.4. National Referee Staff

The National Referee Staff consists of:

- a. Chief Referee;
- b. Assistant Chief Referee;
- c. Training Coordinator;
- d. Referee Staff Administrator;
- e. Regional Lead Referees;
- f. Assistant Lead Referees; and
- g. Other individuals specifically appointed or designated to support the National Referee Program.

Section 1.5. Reporting Structure

- a. The Chief Referee reports to the Director of Sport and has overall responsibility for the leadership, technical direction, administration, and performance of the National Referee Program.
- b. The Assistant Chief Referee reports to the Chief Referee and assists with day-to-day operational coordination, implementation of national priorities, regional communication, and other responsibilities assigned by the Chief Referee.

- c. Regional Lead Referees report directly to the Chief Referee. The Assistant Chief Referee serves as the primary coordinator for routine regional operations, communications, assignments, and implementation of the Chief Referee's direction.
- d. Regional Lead Referees shall keep the Assistant Chief Referee informed of routine regional activities and operational matters. This coordination requirement does not limit a Regional Lead Referee's direct access to, communication with, or accountability to the Chief Referee.
- e. Assistant Lead Referees report to the Regional Lead Referee for their respective region.
- f. The Training Coordinator and Referee Staff Administrator report to the Chief Referee or, when delegated by the Chief Referee, to the Assistant Chief Referee.
- g. The Training Coordinator and Referee Staff Administrator serve as referee leadership and support positions but do not directly supervise Regional Lead Referees or Assistant Lead Referees.
- h. Regional Lead Referees and Assistant Lead Referees shall cooperate with the Training Coordinator and Referee Staff Administrator in carrying out approved training, certification, reporting, records, and administrative responsibilities.
- i. Accountability and supervisory authority remain within the reporting structure established by this section.
- j. See Appendix A, National Referee Staff Organizational Chart, and Appendix B, National Referee Staff Key Leadership Roles and Responsibilities, for visual reference.

Section 1.6. Program Responsibilities

The National Referee Program is responsible for:

- a. Recruiting, developing, mentoring, and retaining qualified referees and judges;
- b. Developing and administering referee education, training, certification, recertification, evaluation, and advancement programs;
- c. Establishing and maintaining standards for referee participation and development at the regional, national, and international levels;
- d. Maintaining referee records, certification information, evaluations, participation records, approved personnel lists, and other required program documentation;
- e. Supporting the interpretation, education, and consistent application of USA Karate, Pan-American Karate Federation, and World Karate Federation competition rules;
- f. Identifying and supporting qualified referees and judges for international advancement and participation in accordance with applicable USA Karate policies;
- g. Administering referee selection and recommendation processes for international competitions and delegations, including World Cup, PKF, WKF, and other approved international events, in accordance with applicable USA Karate policies and approval requirements;
- h. Managing and coordinating referee operations at USA Karate Signature Events and other national activities specifically assigned to the National Referee Staff;
- i. Evaluating referee performance and supporting continued professional and technical development;
- j. Promoting fairness, consistency, professionalism, accountability, and respect throughout the USA Karate referee corps; and
- k. Performing other referee-related responsibilities assigned by the Chief Executive Officer or Director of Sport.

Section 1.7. Scope of Authority

- a.** The National Referee Staff has primary responsibility for referee education, certification, evaluation, development, administration, and operations at USA Karate Signature Events and other national activities specifically assigned to it.
- b.** The National Referee Staff does not automatically direct or control referee operations at every USA Karate sanctioned event.
- c.** Referee operations at a sanctioned event remain the responsibility of the event organizer and designated event referee leadership, subject to USA Karate rules, sanction requirements, policies, and oversight.
- d.** The National Referee Staff may provide technical, educational, administrative, or operational assistance to a sanctioned event when specifically requested and authorized by USA Karate.
- e.** USA Karate retains authority to review a sanctioned event for compliance with applicable rules, policies, safety requirements, and sanctioning standards.

Section 1.8. Supporting Documents

- a.** Detailed position duties, operating procedures, administrative workflows, forms, and staff expectations may be maintained in separate job descriptions, the National Referee Staff Operating Manual, and other approved procedures or administrative guidance.
- b.** Supporting documents may establish detailed methods for carrying out this policy but may not alter the authority, responsibilities, approval requirements, limitations, or rights established by this policy.
- c.** If a supporting document conflicts with this policy, this policy controls unless a more specific approved USA Karate policy expressly provides otherwise.
- d.** The final published version of this policy shall include hyperlinks to the current approved versions of the following supporting documents:
 - (1) National Referee Staff Operations Manual;
 - (2) Chief Referee Job Description;
 - (3) Assistant Chief Referee Job Description;
 - (4) Regional Lead Referee Job Description;
 - (5) Assistant Lead Referee Job Description;
 - (6) Applicable International Referee Selection Policy; and
 - (7) Applicable Team Trials Referee Selection Policy.

SECTION 2. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS, PARTICIPATION, AND RECERTIFICATION

Section 2.1. Requirements for USA Karate Referees

- a.** Maintain a current USA Karate membership in good standing.
- b.** Complete SafeSport training annually or as otherwise required by USA Karate and applicable governing authorities.
- c.** Maintain a current background screening when required.
- d.** Review and sign the USA Karate Referee Code of Conduct annually.
- e.** Review and sign the required Conflict of Interest Disclosure annually.
- f.** Complete written examinations through USA Karate-approved online or in-person resources. Unless otherwise announced, an online examination must be passed within thirty days before the applicable

certification date to remain valid. Unless otherwise provided, the written examination constitutes ten percent of the total evaluation score.

- g. An referee or judge testing to elevate a certification at a USA Karate Signature Event may not coach at that Signature Event and must attend the entire event each day, including the initial briefing and daily briefings.
- h. An referee or judge testing for certification at a Signature Event must remain through the final debriefing unless excused by the Chief Referee or designee due to an extenuating circumstance. A referee or judge who leaves early without approved excusal will not pass the examination and will not receive attendance credit for the Signature Event.

Section 2.2. Certification Categories for USA Karate Referees

USA Karate Kata Certification	USA Karate Kumite Judge Certification	USA Karate Kumite Referee Certification
Kata Judge A, B, C, D, E	Kumite Judge A, B, C, D	Kumite Referee A, B, C, D

Section 2.3. Age, Rank, and Testing Requirements

Certification	Age	Rank	Written Exam	Practical Exam
Kumite Referee A	18+	Shodan / Black Belt	90% at a Signature Event	At Signature Event
Kumite Referee B	18+	Shodan / Black Belt	90% at a Signature Event	At Signature Event
Kumite Referee C	18+	Shodan / Black Belt	90%	Pass
Kumite Referee D	18+	Shodan / Black Belt	90%	Pass
Kumite Judge A	18+	Shodan / Black Belt	90%	Pass
Kumite Judge B	18+	Shodan / Black Belt	90%	Pass
Kumite Judge C	16+	1st Kyu / Brown Belt	80%	Pass
Kumite Judge D	14+	1st Kyu / Brown Belt	80%	Pass
Kata Judge A	18+	Shodan / Black Belt	90% at a Signature Event	At Signature Event
Kata Judge B	18+	Shodan / Black Belt	90% at a Signature Event	At Signature Event
Kata Judge C	18+	Shodan / Black Belt	90%	Pass
Kata Judge D	16+	Shodan / Black Belt	80%	Pass
Kata Judge E	14+	1st Kyu / Brown Belt	80%	Pass

Section 2.4. Participation and Recertification - Annual Requirements

- a. Referees and judges holding USA Karate Referee A or B certifications must attend one Signature Event referee seminar annually and serve as a referee or judge at least once at a Signature Event annually to

maintain their certification level. This requirement includes referees and judges with a current or expired PKF or WKF certification.

- b. For this requirement, Signature Events are the USA Karate National Championships and the USA Karate U.S. Open/Junior International Cup. Attendance includes the initial briefing before competition, all daily briefings, competition assignments, post-competition debriefing, and remaining until participating referees and judges are dismissed at the end of each day. Permission to leave early does not itself constitute an approved attendance exception, although an exception may be approved retroactively under Section 2.5.
- c. To maintain current certification, all other referees and judges at USA Karate Referee C or equivalent certification and below must attend at least one in-person referee seminar annually given by a USA Karate-certified instructor. The referee or judge must also serve at least once at a tournament using USA Karate Rules of Competition with a USA Karate-certified instructor present to document participation in the individual's USA Karate passport. Alternatively, the Chief Referee at the competition, if certified at least as a USA Karate Referee A, may document the participation.
- d. A referee or judge who fails to satisfy the annual requirements may recertify at the prior level by attending the appropriate seminar and passing the required written and practical examinations.
- e. All referees and judges must comply with the USA Karate Referee Code of Conduct.
- f. Failure to comply with these requirements may result in suspension of certification or other corrective action under applicable USA Karate policy.

Section 2.5. Participation and Recertification Exceptions

Exceptions to attendance at all or part of a USA Karate Signature Event may be available to referees or judges conducting authorized business for USA Karate or as otherwise provided by this policy.

Referees with PKF or WKF Certification

- a. Referees and judges with PKF or WKF certification must actively support USA Karate Signature Events. Eligibility for international competitions and events includes the appropriate USA Karate certification and participation as a referee or judge in the two USA Karate Signature Events in the twelve months immediately preceding the international event, subject to this exception process and any additional criteria contained in an applicable international referee selection policy.
- b. Failure to participate as a referee or judge at a Signature Event attended by a referee or judge with PKF or WKF certification may result in forfeiture or suspension of the individual's USA Karate certification or other corrective action.
- c. A referee or judge whose USA Karate certification is not current or in good standing is ineligible for USA Karate financial support to participate in PKF or WKF competitions or events.
- d. Any WKF or PKF no-show fine is the responsibility of the referee or judge involved. If USA Karate receives an invoice for a no-show, USA Karate may invoice the responsible referee or judge. The referee or judge may be suspended from USA Karate sanctioned events, training, or Signature Events until the invoice is paid. Additional administrative action may be taken under applicable policy.

Attendance Exception Requests

- a. A referee or judge requesting an exception from an attendance, participation, certification, or related program requirement shall submit the request and all supporting documentation to the Referee Staff Administrator.
- b. The Referee Staff Administrator shall review the submission for completeness and forward the complete request to the Chief Referee.

- c. The Chief Referee shall approve or deny the request after consultation with the Assistant Chief Referee, Training Coordinator, Referee Staff Administrator, or other appropriate personnel as necessary.
- d. The Referee Staff Administrator shall communicate the decision to the applicant and maintain the request, supporting documentation, and decision in the official records.
- e. An applicant may appeal the Chief Referee's decision to the Director of Sport in writing. The appeal must identify the decision being appealed and the basis for review.
- f. The Director of Sport may affirm, reverse, or modify the decision. The Director of Sport's determination is final within USA Karate unless another review is required by applicable policy or law.
- g. A request arising from an emergency or unforeseeable circumstance, including a circumstance occurring within thirty days of a Signature Event or other required activity, follows the same review and appeal process and must be submitted as soon as reasonably possible with available supporting documentation.
- h. An exception granted under this section does not waive membership, SafeSport, background screening, Code of Conduct, Conflict of Interest, certification, or good-standing requirements.

Section 2.6. Referee Review and Evaluation Process

- a. The Chief Referee oversees the review and evaluation of referees and judges participating in USA Karate Signature Events.
- b. The Chief Referee may designate the Assistant Chief Referee, Training Coordinator, Tatami Managers, approved evaluators, or other qualified personnel to observe and evaluate referees and judges.
- c. Evaluation may consider rules application, judgment, mechanics, communication, consistency, professionalism, teamwork, and readiness.
- d. When follow-up is appropriate, the Chief Referee or Assistant Chief Referee shall meet with the referee or judge to discuss observations and concerns. The Training Coordinator may develop an improvement plan that includes education, mentoring, additional observation, evaluation, or retesting under applicable certification procedures.
- e. Conduct concerns shall be handled under Section 9. The Referee Staff Administrator shall maintain official evaluation and follow-up records.

Section 2.7. Conflict of Interest at Signature Events

In accordance with the USA Karate Referee Code of Conduct, referees and judges holding USA Karate National Kata Judge A or Kumite Referee A certification, or current PKF or WKF certification, may not serve as a coach at a USA Karate Signature Event.

SECTION 3. CERTIFICATION, EVALUATION, AND LICENSING ADMINISTRATION

Section 3.1. Certification Standards

- a. The Chief Referee oversees the technical content of certification, recertification, advancement, participation, and international eligibility standards.
- b. The Training Coordinator reviews existing standards and drafts proposed updates and technical guidance.
- c. The Referee Staff Administrator coordinates administrative implementation, maintains official versions, and confirms that published information reflects current approved requirements.

- d. Changes requiring organizational approval shall be submitted to the Director of Sport and Chief Executive Officer as applicable. Approved standards shall be published and distributed by the Referee Staff Administrator.

Section 3.2. Selection of Instructors, Examiners, and Evaluators

The Training Coordinator shall identify qualified individuals from throughout the USA Karate referee corps to serve as referee instructors, examiners, and evaluators for USA Karate Signature Events and other approved national licensing activities and shall submit a recommended list to the Chief Referee. The Chief Referee shall select and approve the individuals authorized to serve from the recommended list. The Referee Staff Administrator shall maintain the official list of approved personnel and related certification records.

Section 3.3. Examination and Evaluation Materials

- a. The Training Coordinator shall develop, collect, review, and update certification examinations, evaluation forms, instructional materials, and related licensing resources.
- b. The Chief Referee shall review and approve official technical materials.
- c. The Referee Staff Administrator shall maintain approved versions and associated records.

Section 3.4. Conduct of Examinations and Evaluations

- a. Authorized instructors, examiners, and evaluators shall conduct examinations and evaluations in accordance with approved procedures.
- b. The authorized personnel conducting the examination or evaluation shall determine the result.
- c. Examination and evaluation results are presumed valid.

Section 3.5. Review of Certification and Evaluation Results

- a. The Chief Referee may review a certification or evaluation result when there is a reasonable basis to believe that a material procedural error, conflict of interest, misconduct, inaccurate scoring, failure to follow approved procedures, or another substantial irregularity affected the result.
- b. The Chief Referee may not overturn, invalidate, or materially modify a result without the concurrence of the Director of Sport.
- c. Any overturning, invalidation, or material modification must be documented in writing and identify the basis for the determination.
- d. The Referee Staff Administrator shall maintain the original result, review documentation, and final determination in the official program records.

Section 3.6. Certification and Participation Records

- a. The Referee Staff Administrator shall maintain official certification, recertification, examination, evaluation, attendance, participation, compliance, and advancement records.
- b. Referees and judges, instructors, examiners, and evaluators, Regional Lead Referees, and Assistant Lead Referees shall timely provide required documentation.
- c. The Referee Staff Administrator may request required records on behalf of the Chief Referee or Assistant Chief Referee. This administrative responsibility does not create supervisory authority over the individuals from whom records are requested.

Section 3.7. PKF and WKF Certification Documentation

Upon passing, renewing, or recertifying any PKF or WKF referee or judge certification, the referee or judge shall submit the applicable certificate, Karate Passport entry, or other required documentation to the Referee Staff Administrator within the timeframe and manner established by USA Karate. The Referee Staff Administrator shall verify receipt, maintain the official certification record, and coordinate any required update to the individual's USA Karate membership or referee-program record. The referee or judge remains responsible for timely submission of accurate documentation and for maintaining all applicable PKF and WKF certification and renewal requirements.

SECTION 4. WKF CERTIFICATION UPGRADE TEST PRIORITY LIST

Section 4.1. Initial Placement

- a. When a referee or judge receives a first WKF certification, either Kata Judge B or Kumite Judge B, the referee or judge may not upgrade that certification again during the same calendar year.
- b. The referee or judge is placed at the last position on the applicable USA Karate WKF Certification Upgrade Test Priority List and becomes eligible to upgrade in the calendar year following receipt of the first WKF certification.

Section 4.2. Testing Opportunities and Movement on the List

USA Karate will submit all eligible names on the Priority List when permitted. WKF may confirm all submitted candidates or limit the number accepted for testing.

- a. A referee or judge who passes an examination or evaluation remains on the Priority List at a position based on the new certification level. Candidates holding higher certifications have priority over candidates holding lower certifications.
- b. A referee or judge who is permitted to test and fails is moved to the bottom of the Priority List. The seniority date becomes the date of the failed test.
- c. A referee or judge unable to test because of a WKF quota remains in the same position.
- d. A referee or judge who declines a testing opportunity is moved to the bottom of the Priority List. The seniority date becomes the date of the tournament not attended.

Section 4.3. Highest Certifications and Renewal

- a. Referees and judges holding WKF Kata Judge A or WKF Kumite Referee A are no longer listed for the respective certification in which they hold the highest WKF credential.
- b. Such referees and judges must maintain required license-renewal fees and other renewal obligations in accordance with WKF requirements.
- c. A referee or judge who allows a certification to lapse or fall out of good standing and later seeks renewal shall be placed at the bottom of the applicable Priority List and progress in the same manner as other candidates.

Section 4.4. Good Standing and Eligibility

Maintaining status on the Priority List requires current good standing with USA Karate, including:

- a. Attendance and participation as a referee or judge at two USA Karate Signature Events in the twelve months immediately preceding participation in a WKF or PKF event, except that one of the two required Signature Events may be waived under Section 2.5;

- b.** Current USA Karate membership;
- c.** Current SafeSport compliance;
- d.** Current required background screening; and
- e.** Current signed Conflict of Interest and Code of Conduct forms.

Section 4.5. Priority When Testing Slots Are Limited

- a.** Priority begins at the top of the applicable Priority List.
- b.** Referees and judges holding PKF Kumite Referee A or PKF Kata Judge A have priority.
- c.** Priority is then based on the date the referee or judge received the applicable PKF A certification. Referees and judges holding PKF Kata Judge A or PKF Kumite Judge A may also be considered based on the date the respective certification was received.

Section 4.6. Tie-Breaking

If more than one referee or judge receives the applicable PKF certification on the same date, priority is determined by the date the individual first earned the applicable USA Karate National A certification. If a tie remains, it shall be resolved in the following order:

1. The earlier date the individual earned both USA Karate Kumite Referee A and Kata Judge A certifications.
2. The earlier date the individual earned both PKF Kumite Referee A and Kata Judge A certifications.
3. The Chief Referee shall decide the order after consultation with the Assistant Chief Referee and Training Coordinator. The determination must be documented and provided to the Director of Sport. The Referee Staff Administrator shall update the Priority List.

Section 4.7. Administration of the Priority List

The Referee Staff Administrator shall maintain the official Priority List and supporting certification, participation, examination, eligibility, and compliance records and shall publish or communicate the list in accordance with approved USA Karate procedures.

SECTION 5. PKF AND WKF CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Section 5.1. Pan-American Karate Federation Certification Categories

PKF Kata Judge	PKF Kumite Judge	PKF Kumite Referee
Judge A	Judge A	Referee A
Judge B	Judge B	Referee B
Judge C	Judge C	

Section 5.2. PKF General Requirements

- a.** All PKF referees and judges must comply with all requirements applicable to USA Karate referees and judges.
- b.** A referee or judge whose USA Karate certification is not current or in good standing is ineligible for USA Karate support to participate in PKF competitions or events.

- c. USA Karate referees and judges holding USA Karate National Kata Judge A or USA Karate National Kumite Referee A are eligible to test for PKF certification, subject to applicable PKF requirements and USA Karate approval processes.
- d. PKF referees and judges must be at least twenty-one years of age and hold at least USA Karate 2nd Dan, or satisfy the current PKF minimum age and rank requirements.
- e. Upon passing or recertifying for any PKF certification, the referee or judge must submit the applicable certificate or Karate Passport entry to the Referee Staff Administrator.
- f. Subject to Section 2.5 and any applicable international referee selection policy, a USA Karate referee or judge must have participated as a referee or judge in the two USA Karate Signature Events in the twelve months immediately preceding participation in a PKF event.

Section 5.3. World Karate Federation Certification Categories

WKF Kata Judge	WKF Kumite Judge	WKF Kumite Referee
Judge A	Judge A	Referee A
Judge B	Judge B	Referee B

Section 5.4. WKF General Requirements

- a. All WKF referees and judges must comply with all requirements applicable to USA Karate referees and judges and, as relevant, PKF referees and judges.
- b. A referee or judge whose USA Karate certification is not current or in good standing is ineligible for USA Karate support to participate in WKF competitions or events.
- c. USA Karate referees and judges holding PKF Kata Judge A or PKF Kumite Judge A are eligible to test for WKF certification, subject to applicable WKF requirements and USA Karate approval processes.
- d. WKF referees and judges must be at least twenty-five years of age and hold at least USA Karate 3rd Dan, or satisfy the current WKF minimum age and rank requirements.
- e. Upon passing or recertifying for a WKF certification, the referee or judge must submit the applicable certificate or Karate Passport entry to the Referee Staff Administrator.
- f. Subject to Section 2.5 and any applicable international referee selection policy, a USA Karate referee or judge must have participated as a referee or judge in the two USA Karate Signature Events in the twelve months immediately preceding participation in a WKF event.

Section 5.5. International Advancement and Recommendations

- a. The Chief Referee oversees the identification, evaluation, and recommendation of referees and judges for PKF, WKF, World Games, and other approved international opportunities in accordance with applicable USA Karate policy.
- b. Before making a recommendation, the Chief Referee shall consult the Assistant Chief Referee and Training Coordinator and may consult the Referee Staff Administrator regarding certification, participation, compliance, examination, Priority List, and administrative records.
- c. The Chief Referee shall submit recommendations to the Director of Sport. Funding, designation, assignment, and final approval shall follow the applicable international referee selection and financial policies.

- d. The Assistant Chief Referee may assist with delegation, travel, and operational coordination when assigned. The Referee Staff Administrator shall verify and maintain supporting records.

Section 5.6. USA Referee Delegation Lead

- a. For an international WKF event attended by multiple USA Karate referees, the Chief Referee may designate one qualified referee to serve as the USA Referee Delegation Lead.
- b. The USA Referee Delegation Lead shall serve as the primary point of contact for participating USA referees and as the in-country referee liaison to USA Karate.
- c. The designation is limited to communication and coordination responsibilities assigned by the Chief Referee and does not create authority over WKF referee assignments, evaluations, event referee personnel, or the overall USA Karate delegation.

Section 5.7. WKF Referee Representation at PKF Championships

- a. The Chief Referee shall ensure that at least two USA Karate referees holding current WKF Kumite Referee certification are present at each Junior PKF Championship and each Senior PKF Championship.
- b. The identification, recommendation, designation, funding, and participation of these WKF Referees shall be handled in accordance with applicable USA Karate policies and approval processes.

SECTION 6. RULES, INTERPRETATIONS, AND EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

Section 6.1. Rules Review and Drafting

- a. The Training Coordinator shall coordinate review of USA Karate, PKF, and WKF competition rules and interpretations and shall draft proposed revisions to the USA Karate Rules of Competition when needed.
- b. The Training Coordinator may request input from Regional Lead Referees, Assistant Lead Referees, qualified referees and judges, coaches, Technical Committee members, athletes, event personnel, or other individuals designated by the Chief Referee. Such consultation does not create a standing committee or independent approval authority.

Section 6.2. Approval of Rules and Interpretations

- a. The Chief Referee shall review and approve the technical content of proposed rules, interpretations, and revisions.
- b. Following technical approval, the proposal shall be submitted to the Director of Sport for approval and then to the Chief Executive Officer for final approval.
- c. The Referee Staff Administrator shall maintain and distribute the official approved rules and interpretations.

Section 6.3. Educational Materials

- a. The Training Coordinator shall develop educational materials, presentations, guidance, examples, and training resources concerning approved rules and interpretations.
- b. Educational materials concerning a rule change or new interpretation may not be finalized or distributed until the underlying rule or interpretation has received all required approvals.
- c. The Chief Referee shall approve technical content. The Referee Staff Administrator shall maintain and distribute official materials. Regional Lead Referees shall assist with communication and education within their regions.

Section 6.4. Future Multidisciplinary Rules Committee

USA Karate may establish a multidisciplinary Rules Committee or review group in the future, including representatives from referee leadership, coaching, the Technical Committee, athletes, event operations, and other appropriate areas. No such body exists under this policy unless formally established. Any future body shall possess only the authority expressly assigned to it and may not independently alter, approve, or publish rules outside the applicable USA Karate approval process.

SECTION 7. USA KARATE SIGNATURE EVENT OPERATIONS

Section 7.1. Applicability

This section applies to USA Karate Signature Events and other national activities specifically assigned to the National Referee Staff. It does not automatically apply to all USA Karate sanctioned events.

Section 7.2. Chief Referee Authority

- a.** The Chief Referee has overall technical and referee-program authority for Signature Event referee operations.
- b.** The Chief Referee approves principal referee leadership assignments and has final authority to select and appoint Appeals Jury members.
- c.** The Chief Referee oversees referee performance, technical consistency, and competition integrity.

Section 7.3. Assistant Chief Referee Responsibilities

- a.** The Assistant Chief Referee coordinates referee staffing, operational assignments, schedules, rotations, and tatami deployment.
- b.** The Assistant Chief Referee may make routine operational changes consistent with the Chief Referee's direction.
- c.** The Assistant Chief Referee coordinates with Regional Lead Referees, approved referee leadership, and event operations as necessary.

Section 7.4. Appeals Jury

- a.** The Chief Referee has final authority to select and appoint the Appeals Jury.
- b.** The Chief Referee may delegate identification, coordination, or appointment of Appeals Jury members to the Assistant Chief Referee generally or for a specific Signature Event.
- c.** An appointment made under delegated authority is deemed an appointment of the Chief Referee and may be modified or revoked by the Chief Referee.
- d.** The Tournament Director has no authority over referee assignments or Appeals Jury appointments.

Section 7.5. Event Assignments and Adjustments

The Chief Referee approves principal leadership assignments. The Assistant Chief Referee manages routine operational assignments and may adjust schedules, rotations, tatami assignments, and staffing as necessary, provided those adjustments remain consistent with the Chief Referee's direction and applicable policy.

SECTION 8. PARTICIPATION IN NON-USA KARATE COMPETITIONS

Section 8.1. Purpose

USA Karate referees and judges must avoid conduct that could create confusion regarding USA Karate's approval, sanction, endorsement, or affiliation with a competition conducted by another organization. Individuals holding national referee leadership positions or international referee or judge certifications are also expected to support competition standards consistent with USA Karate rules and athlete-safety requirements.

Section 8.2. Use of Referee Badges and Credentials

- a. A USA Karate referee or judge may not wear, display, or use a USA Karate, PKF, or WKF referee or judge badge, credential, uniform designation, or other certification identifier while officiating at a competition that is not sanctioned or approved by USA Karate, PKF, or WKF.
- b. This restriction applies even when the competition uses or represents that it uses USA Karate or WKF Rules of Competition.
- c. An exception must be approved in writing by the Director of Sport before the competition.

Section 8.3. Individuals Subject to Additional Restrictions

The following individuals are subject to the additional restrictions in this section:

- 1. Members of the National Referee Staff, including the Chief Referee, Assistant Chief Referee, Training Coordinator, Referee Staff Administrator, Regional Lead Referees, and Assistant Lead Referees; and
- 2. USA Karate referees and judges holding a current PKF or WKF referee or judge certification.

National Referee Staff members are covered because they serve in positions of USA Karate referee leadership, regardless of whether they are currently certified or serving in a referee or judge capacity at the non-USA Karate competition.

Section 8.4. Competitions Not Using Approved Rules

An individual identified in Section 8.3 may not serve as a referee, judge, Tatami Manager, referee supervisor, instructor, evaluator, or in another referee, judging, or referee-leadership capacity at a non-USA Karate competition that does not use USA Karate Rules of Competition or substantially equivalent rules approved by USA Karate and represents the equivalent of a sanctioned competition conducted by another karate organization.

Section 8.5. Requests for Clarification or Exception

- a. A person uncertain whether proposed participation is permitted must submit the relevant event information to the Chief Referee before accepting or performing the assignment.
- b. The Chief Referee shall review the request and may consult the Assistant Chief Referee, Training Coordinator, Referee Staff Administrator, or other appropriate personnel before forwarding a recommendation to the Director of Sport.
- c. The Director of Sport shall make the final determination. Any approval must be issued in writing and may include conditions or limitations.
- d. Participation before receiving written approval is at the individual's own risk and may be treated as a violation of this policy.

Section 8.6. No Representation or Endorsement

Approval under this section does not authorize an individual to represent a competition as sanctioned, endorsed, approved, or affiliated with USA Karate, PKF, or WKF and does not waive any Code of Conduct, conflict-of-interest, membership, certification, or other applicable requirement.

SECTION 9. CONDUCT, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND DISCIPLINE

Section 9.1. Professional Conduct

- a.** The Chief Referee and Assistant Chief Referee shall promote and enforce professional conduct within the National Referee Program.
- b.** Regional Lead Referees and Assistant Lead Referees shall model professional conduct and report concerns through the established reporting structure.
- c.** All referees, judges, and National Referee Staff members remain subject to applicable USA Karate Codes of Conduct and policies.

Section 9.2. Routine Performance and Operational Concerns

Routine technical, performance, professionalism, and operational concerns may be addressed by the Chief Referee or Assistant Chief Referee through counseling, instruction, training, mentoring, observation, reassignment, an improvement plan, or other appropriate program-management action.

Section 9.3. Formal Conduct Matters

An alleged Code of Conduct violation warranting formal corrective action or discipline shall be referred to the USA Karate Disciplinary Committee unless the matter falls within the jurisdiction of the Ethics Committee, Judicial Committee, U.S. Center for SafeSport, USADA, law enforcement, or another authority with jurisdiction.

Section 9.4. Role of the National Referee Staff

The National Referee Staff may provide records, observations, technical context, event information, or other relevant assistance but does not control an independent disciplinary, grievance, hearing, ethics, SafeSport, anti-doping, or adjudicatory process.

Section 9.5. Direct Reporting and Escalation

- a.** Significant concerns shall generally be reported by the Chief Referee to the Director of Sport. The Director of Sport shall determine whether referral to the Chief Executive Officer, Board of Directors, Disciplinary Committee, Ethics Committee, Judicial Committee, or another authority is appropriate.
- b.** Nothing in this policy prevents the Chief Referee from reporting directly to an appropriate committee, hearing body, the U.S. Center for SafeSport, USADA, law enforcement, or another authority when direct reporting is within that authority's jurisdiction or required by policy, law, or governing-body rules.
- c.** Except when direct reporting is required, urgent, necessary to preserve confidentiality, or necessary to protect the integrity of a process, the Chief Referee should notify the Director of Sport.

SECTION 10. SELECTION OF REFEREES FOR TEAM TRIALS AND OTHER NATIONAL EVENTS

Referees and judges for USA Karate Team Trials and other national events subject to a separate referee selection policy shall be selected in accordance with the applicable USA Karate policy or approved selection

procedure. The National Referee Staff shall perform the technical, administrative, and consultative responsibilities assigned to it under the applicable selection policy. Nothing in this section limits USA Karate's authority to revise or replace a referee selection policy or procedure. If this policy conflicts with a specific approved referee selection policy, the specific selection policy controls.

SECTION 11. NATIONAL REFEREE STAFF GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

Section 11.1. Appointments and Terms

- a.** The Director of Sport selects the Chief Referee with the concurrence of the Chief Executive Officer. The Chief Referee has no fixed term and is reviewed annually.
- b.** The Chief Referee selects the Assistant Chief Referee with the concurrence of the Director of Sport. The Assistant Chief Referee serves a renewable two-year term and is reviewed annually.
- c.** The Chief Referee selects Regional Lead Referees with the concurrence of the Director of Sport. Regional Lead Referees serve renewable two-year terms and are reviewed annually.
- d.** Each Regional Lead Referee selects the Assistant Lead Referee for the region with the concurrence of the Chief Referee. Assistant Lead Referees serve renewable two-year terms and are reviewed annually.
- e.** The Chief Referee selects the Training Coordinator and Referee Staff Administrator with the concurrence of the Director of Sport. Terms and review expectations shall be established in the applicable job descriptions or other approved program documents.

Section 11.2. Modification, Nonrenewal, and Removal

- a.** An appointment may be modified, ended, or not renewed by the appointing authority with any concurrence required under Section 11.1 and applicable USA Karate policy. Removal should be based on organizational needs, performance, misconduct, or failure to satisfy program requirements.
- b.** Ending, modifying, or declining to renew a leadership appointment does not by itself affect the individual's USA Karate membership, referee certification, or general eligibility to participate. Any such separate action must follow the applicable policy or procedure.

Section 11.3. Delegation

- a.** The Chief Referee may delegate technical, operational, or administrative duties while retaining overall responsibility for the National Referee Program.
- b.** Delegation does not permanently transfer authority reserved to the Chief Referee.

Section 11.4. Absence, Vacancy, and Emergency Authority

- a.** When the Chief Referee is unavailable, the Assistant Chief Referee may exercise operational authority necessary to continue program or event functions.
- b.** The Assistant Chief Referee may not permanently change policy, materially alter certification standards, reverse certification or evaluation results, or make a decision reserved to the Chief Referee without express authorization from the Chief Referee, Director of Sport, or Chief Executive Officer.
- c.** If both the Chief Referee and Assistant Chief Referee are unavailable and immediate action is necessary for athlete safety, competition integrity, or event operations, the Director of Sport may temporarily designate a qualified individual. Any designation shall be limited in duration and scope.
- d.** The Director of Sport may designate an acting Chief Referee during a vacancy or extended absence.

Section 11.5. National Referee Staff Requirements

- a. All National Referee Staff members must remain USA Karate members in good standing and satisfy applicable membership, SafeSport, background screening, Code of Conduct, Conflict of Interest Disclosure, and other requirements.
- b. National Referee Staff members shall complete anti-retaliation, conflict-of-interest, athlete-safety, and other training required by USA Karate or applicable governing authorities.
- c. A National Referee Staff member may not officially represent another national federation or hold a substantial position that conflicts with the individual's responsibilities to USA Karate.
- d. National Referee Staff members shall promptly disclose actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest and shall recuse themselves when directed or otherwise required.
- e. Failure to satisfy these requirements may result in restriction or suspension from assigned duties, nonrenewal, modification, or removal from the staff position. Any separate action affecting membership, certification, or general participation must be handled under the applicable policy or procedure.

Section 11.6. Meetings and Internal Communication

- a. The Chief Referee shall hold National Referee Staff meetings as reasonably necessary to address program goals, technical direction, policy, education, Signature Event planning, and regional progress.
- b. The Assistant Chief Referee shall coordinate operational follow-up and regular communication with Regional Lead Referees.
- c. Regional Lead Referees may communicate directly with the Chief Referee regarding strategic matters, technical direction, appointments, performance concerns, sensitive issues, or matters requiring final authority.
- d. Regional Lead Referees shall keep the Assistant Chief Referee informed of routine operational matters and shall normally coordinate scheduling, regional updates, training coordination, and other day-to-day questions through the Assistant Chief Referee.
- e. The Training Coordinator and Referee Staff Administrator shall participate as relevant to their responsibilities.
- f. Regional Lead Referees shall communicate relevant information to Assistant Lead Referees, approved instructors, referees, and judges in their regions.
- g. The Referee Staff Administrator shall support official notices, agendas, summaries, action items, and records. Detailed meeting and communication procedures may be maintained in the National Referee Staff Operating Manual.

Section 11.7. Temporary Working Groups

The Chief Referee may establish temporary working groups or task forces for specific National Referee Program projects, USA Karate Signature Events, national licensing activities, or educational initiatives. Members shall be selected by the Chief Referee, who may delegate coordination to the Assistant Chief Referee, Training Coordinator, or Referee Staff Administrator. Any such group shall have only the responsibilities assigned to it and shall conclude when its work is complete.

Section 11.8. Coordination with Other Programs and Committees

The National Referee Staff may coordinate with committees, staff, and program leaders on matters of overlapping responsibility. Coordination does not transfer authority over referee assignments, evaluations, certifications, Appeals Jury appointments, or other responsibilities reserved to the National Referee Staff, and the National Referee Staff does not exercise authority reserved to another committee, staff function, or

program. Significant cross-program matters shall generally proceed through the Director of Sport unless direct referral is permitted or required.

SECTION 12. RECORDS, REPORTING, STRATEGIC PLANNING, AND RESOURCES

Section 12.1. Referee Staff Administrator

The Referee Staff Administrator serves as the primary administrative contact for the National Referee Staff and coordinates official communications, records, forms, notices, schedules, and documentation. The Administrator shall maintain the official referee roster, candidate lists, approved personnel lists, certification and recertification records, examinations and evaluations, attendance and participation records, compliance documentation, international results, and the WKF Certification Upgrade Test Priority List.

Section 12.2. Collection and Maintenance of Information

The Referee Staff Administrator may request required documentation from Regional Lead Referees, Assistant Lead Referees, instructors, examiners, evaluators, referees, and judges on behalf of the Chief Referee or Assistant Chief Referee. This authority is administrative and does not create independent supervisory authority.

Section 12.3. Annual Report

- a. The Chief Referee shall prepare an annual report addressing National Referee Program activities, development, performance, and needs.
- b. The annual report shall be provided annually to the Director of Sport, Chief Executive Officer, and Board of Directors by March 1 of the succeeding year.
- c. National Referee Staff members shall provide information reasonably requested for preparation of the annual report.

Section 12.4. Strategic Planning

- a. The Chief Referee shall develop and implement short- and long-term National Referee Program goals in coordination with the Director of Sport.
- b. Goals may address recruitment, retention, education, certification, regional development, Signature Event performance, and international advancement.
- c. The National Referee Staff shall support implementation and provide information needed to evaluate progress.
- d. The Chief Referee and Director of Sport shall periodically review program performance and adjust priorities as appropriate.

Section 12.5. Budget and Resources

- a. The Chief Referee shall identify and request budget and resource needs through the Director of Sport for consideration under USA Karate's budgeting and approval processes.
- b. The Assistant Chief Referee, Training Coordinator, Referee Staff Administrator, Regional Lead Referees, and Assistant Lead Referees shall provide requested information.
- c. The Referee Staff Administrator may assist with estimates, documentation, and tracking as directed.
- d. All expenditures, commitments, and reimbursements are subject to USA Karate financial policies, approved budgets, and required prior approvals.

Section 12.6. Compensation and Reimbursement

- a. Appointment to the National Referee Staff does not itself create a right to compensation, travel, lodging, or reimbursement.
- b. USA Karate may provide approved support for assigned services subject to budget availability, applicable policy, event requirements, and prior authorization.
- c. No National Referee Staff member may commit USA Karate funds, authorize an expense, or promise reimbursement without proper approval.
- d. An assignment does not guarantee compensation or financial support.

SECTION 13. FINAL PROVISIONS

Section 13.1. Interpretation and Administration

The Director of Sport is responsible for administration of this policy. Questions regarding interpretation shall be resolved in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer and, where appropriate, the Board or applicable governance documents.

Section 13.2. Conflict with Other Documents

If this policy conflicts with a job description, operating manual, procedure, form, or administrative guidance, this policy controls unless a more specific approved USA Karate policy expressly provides otherwise.

Section 13.3. Severability

If any provision of this policy is found invalid or unenforceable, the remaining provisions continue in effect.

Section 13.4. Amendments

This policy may be amended in accordance with USA Karate policy approval procedures.

Section 13.5. Supersession and Transition

- a. This policy supersedes prior policies, procedures, and governing documents relating to the Referee Committee and administration of the National Referee Program to the extent of any conflict.
- b. Upon the effective date, the Referee Committee ceases to exist and its remaining operational, educational, certification, administrative, and program responsibilities transfer to the National Referee Staff or other authority identified in this policy.
- c. Existing certifications, examination results, evaluations, Priority List positions, records, appointments, approved materials, and other valid actions taken under prior policy remain effective unless modified in accordance with applicable USA Karate policy.
- d. Former Referee Committee and Referee Committee Secretary records shall be transferred to the Referee Staff Administrator or National Office.
- e. The Director of Sport shall assign any pending matter to the appropriate person, staff function, committee, or other authority.

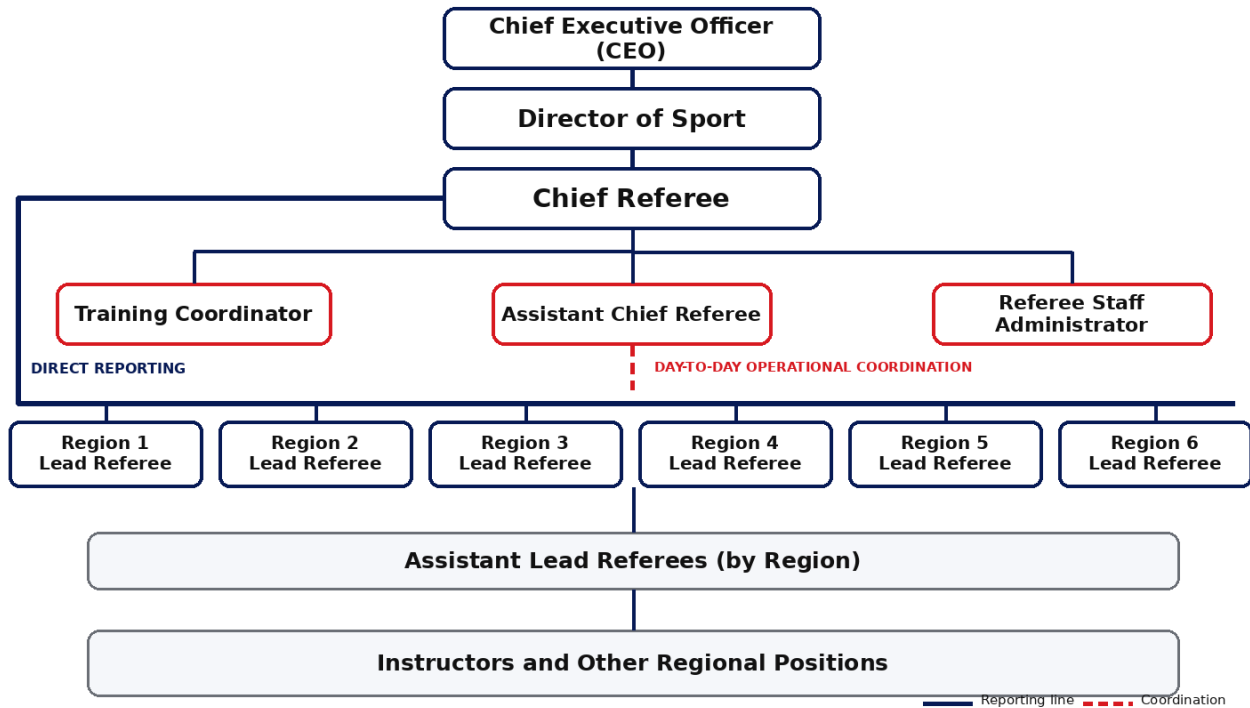
Section 13.6. Effective Date

This policy takes effect on September 1, 2026.

APPENDIX A. NATIONAL REFEREE STAFF ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



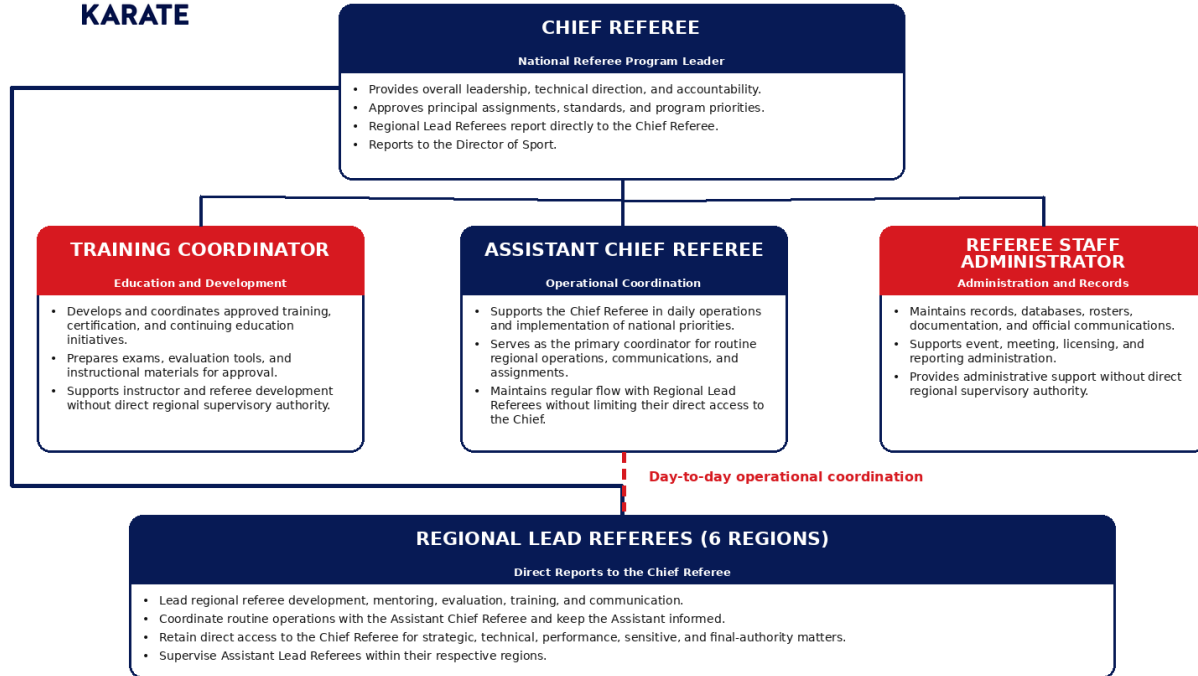
USA KARATE NATIONAL REFEREE STAFF ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



APPENDIX B. NATIONAL REFEREE STAFF KEY LEADERSHIP ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES



NATIONAL REFEREE STAFF KEY LEADERSHIP ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES



Solid line: reporting relationship

Dashed red line: operational coordination

All roles operate under the USA Karate Referee Policy.