

2025-26 USA Fencing Parafencing Pipeline Criteria

Athletes will be evaluated annually at an open evaluation camp. Athletes will be placed in the pipeline based on feedback from the coaches and staff present at the camp and the 2024-25 season's competition performances and progression. Athletes may move throughout the pipeline during the season based on current performances and National Team Coach feedback.

ELITE

Athlete is competitive internationally and pursuing Paralympic Games qualification.

Must meet minimum 4 of the below qualifications:

- Achieved intermittent top-8 World Cup finishes.
- Has achieved consistent top-16 World Cup finishes.
- Medal at the most recent Americas Zonal Championships.
- Ranked in the top 25% of the World Abilitysport Ranking List (while being in the top-30).
- Consistent parafencing training with a coach in alignment with their training plan.
- Competing in a minimum of 75% of designated international competitions.

EMERGING

Athlete is pursuing elite status and has the potential to make the National Team.

Must meet minimum 4 of the below qualifications:

- Achieved intermittent top-16 World Cup finishes.
- Consistently advancing out of pools into DE's at international competitions.
- Consistently finishing top 30% of the field at USA Fencing NAC's.
- Ranked in the top 50% on the World Abilitysport Ranking List.
- Consistent parafencing training with a coach in local club in alignment with their training plan.
- Participating in a minimum of 75% of emerging athlete training camps.

DEVELOPMENT

Athlete has a clear intention of being competitive in parafencing nationally and potentially internationally.

- Seeking opportunities for parafencing training with coaches.
- Athletes in this category should be seeking all competition opportunities at the local, regional, and national level.

RECREATION

Athlete intention is to participate in the sport for fun, community, fitness/exercise, etc.

- No performance or training expectations.
- Athlete participation may include local training, local & regional competition, possibly NAC participation.

Training environment evaluation criteria across categories:

- Athlete ability to follow instructions
- Athlete decision making ability
- Athlete reception to new ideas and coachability
- Athlete stress management
- Athlete physical and psychological profile
- Athlete interactions and team contributions

ATHLETE SERVICES & SUPPORT WITHIN PIPELINE:

Elite – Designated international competition & training camp travel stipend, elite training camps, 1st priority coaching at international competitions, VA stipend for veterans, athlete performance plans, coach check-ins between national team coach, personal coach, and athlete. National Team designation. Athletes are required to attend 60% of National Team training camps. Elite category = US Parafencing National Team designation.

The Elite category & Parafencing National Team designation will be capped with 4 female and 4 male fencers with a minimum of one Cat B athlete in each gender.

Emerging – Potential for USOPC support with EAH and DAS based on international performance, emerging training camps, 2nd priority coaching at international competitions, VA stipend for veterans, athlete performance plans, coach check-ins between national team coach, personal coach, and athlete.

Development – Decision to compete in international competition should be based on a conversation between the athlete, the National Team coach, parafencing manager, and personal coach. May have the opportunity to attend emerging athlete camps for additional training. Begin to track your training.

USOPC Athlete Support & Services

The USOPC now has a new “Team USA Athlete” definition: Team USA athletes are those who have been selected to represent the U.S. at a Delegation Event or a competition on the pathway to the Olympic or Paralympic Games as determined by their NGB.

Eligibility criteria include:

1. Nominated to the U.S. Olympic or Paralympic Team; or
 2. Nominated to the U.S. Pan American Games or U.S. Parapan American Games Team; or
 3. Selected to represent the U.S. in a World Championships or Operation Gold event (as defined in the funding schedule); or
 4. Selected to represent the U.S. in an international competition identified on the pathway to an Olympic or Paralympic Games (e.g., Olympic Qualification Tournament, World Cup Final); or
 5. Earned a top world rank identified on the pathway to Olympic or Paralympic Games, as defined by the NGB
- More information can be found at www.usopc.org/teamusa-eligibility

Qualifying Parafencing events for the 2025-26 season to meet the above criteria are:

- World Championships – September 2025
- Indonesia World Cup – September 2025
- Thailand World Cup – November 2025
- Pisa World Cup – February 2026
- Eger World Cup – April 2026
- Florida World Cup – May 2026
- U23 World Championships – July 2026

Direct Athlete Support (DAS) - All athletes are eligible to earn DAS stipends based on international performance.

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
Top-50% - \$500 per event

Event field with twenty-nine (29) or less 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

The following USOPC benefits are available to athletes that meet the Team USA Athlete Definition. Both Tier A & Tier B are a part of the Teams USA Athlete Definition:

Benefit	Tier A OLY/ PLY	Tier B Team USA	Post Eligibility Athlete
Athlete Ombuds for independent, confidential advice and assistance with dispute resolution	✓	✓	✓
Athlete Marketing & Promotion	✓	✓	✓
Career & Education	✓	✓	✓
Financial Support (Grants & Financial Literacy)	✓	✓	✓
Athlete Ombuds Legal Aid (Legal Aid and Commercial Agreement Resource Programs)	✓	✓	✗
Medical Benefits (see details for eligibility)	✓	✓	✗
Stevens Award (2006 & 2028)	✓	✗	✗

EAHI – The USOPC Elite Athlete Health Insurance (EAHI) program will be changing starting Jan 1, 2026. Until December 31, 2026, Elite Category athletes are eligible to receive EAHI. Starting January 1, 2026, Parafencing will have a total of 8 EAHI slots available to eligible athletes:

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 in the order of international ranking ([iwas.ophardt.online/en/search/rankings/1](https://www.usfencing.org/en/search/rankings/1)) averaging all ranked weapons. You must meet the Team USA Athlete definition to be eligible.

For example, if an athlete is ranked 12th in Women's Foil Cat A and 16th in Women's Epee Cat A, the equation used will be $(12+16)/2 = 14^{\text{th}}$

If there is not an eligible Category B athlete to be offered a slot, that available slot will be offered to the next eligible Category A athlete from the same gender. Athletes awarded EAHI that choose to decline it are still eligible to receive the benefits marked below for EAHI Awarded athletes.

Medical Benefit	EAHI AWARDED	EAHI ELIGIBLE	PAN/PARAPAN AM ONLY	POST ELIGIBILITY ATHLETE
Medical Network	✓	✓	✓	✗
Mental Health Assistance Fund	✓	✓	✓	✗
Psychological Services	✓	✗	✗	✗
Medical Assistance Fund	✓	✗	✗	✗
OPTC Sports Medicine Clinics	✓	✗	✗	✗

Once activated, athletes receive 12 months of EAHI. Returning Olympians/Paralympians are eligible for 2 years. Loss of benefit: generally, 1-month transition for health insurance, 6-month transition for psychological services, medical network and assistance funds.