

High Performance Athlete Pregnancy and Parental Leave Policy

Supporting Athlete Health, Parenthood, and Return to High Performance

1. Purpose and Principles

The purpose of this policy is to support athletes who experience pregnancy or become parents while protecting their health, well-being, and ability to continue pursuing long-term athletic careers.

USA Fencing recognizes that pregnancy, childbirth, and parenthood should not negatively impact an athlete's opportunity to pursue excellence in sport. This policy establishes protections intended to support athletes who intend to return to high-performance training and competition following pregnancy or the arrival of a child.

Pregnancy and childbirth involve unique physical demands and recovery considerations. As such, athletes who give birth may require additional time and support to safely return to training and competition. This policy provides specific protections for athletes during pregnancy and the postpartum period in recognition of these factors.

At the same time, USA Fencing recognizes that athletes may become parents through adoption, surrogacy, or as a non-birth parent. This policy is intended to support these athletes through parental leave provisions that allow them to balance the transition to parenthood with their continued participation in high-performance sport.

The guiding principles of this policy are to:

- Support athlete health and well-being
- Protect athletes from losing funding or competitive opportunities due to pregnancy or parenthood
- Promote a sustainable return to high-performance sport following the arrival of a child
- Ensure fairness and transparency in funding and selection considerations

2. Eligibility

To receive the protections outlined in this policy, athletes must be in good standing with USA Fencing and must intend to return to training and competition following the period of pregnancy or parental leave.

Athletes who may have become pregnant on or after August 1, 2025 are eligible for the protections outlined in this policy.

3. Definitions

- **Notification Date:** The date on which an athlete formally notifies the Chief of Sport Performance at USA Fencing that they are pregnant or that they expect to become a parent through adoption, surrogacy, or another legal parenthood arrangement. The Notification Date will be used to determine the athlete's protected funding level, ranking status, and eligibility for protections under this policy. For adoption or surrogacy, the Notification Date will be considered as the date the child is placed with the athlete.
- **Return-to-Competition Date:** The date on which the athlete first competes in a competition following pregnancy, childbirth, adoption, or parental leave.

4. Notification

Athletes seeking protections under this policy should notify the Chief of Sport Performance at USA Fencing as soon as reasonably possible after pregnancy is confirmed or after adoption, surrogacy, or anticipated placement of a child has been confirmed.

Upon notification, USA Fencing will work with the athlete to confirm eligibility for the applicable protections and to establish the athlete's protected status for funding, ranking, and selection considerations.

USA Fencing will treat all information related to pregnancy, adoption, surrogacy, or parental status with appropriate confidentiality and will share such information only with individuals who require it in order to administer this policy.

USA Fencing may request reasonable documentation to confirm pregnancy, expected birth, adoption placement, or surrogacy arrangements in order to implement the provisions of this policy.

5. Pregnancy and Birth Parent Protections

Monthly Direct Athlete Support (Able-Body)

- The athlete's points (both USA Fencing and FIE) as of the Notification Date month will be frozen for funding purposes.
- If the athlete's points standings or funding category improves after the Notification Date based on results achieved after the Notification Date, the protected funding level will be adjusted upward accordingly.
- The athlete will continue to receive the same monthly stipend (or a higher stipend if applicable) from the Notification Date through the duration of pregnancy and for an additional twelve (12) months following the birth or end of pregnancy (end of pregnancy refers to childbirth, miscarriage, stillbirth, or medical termination).

- For example:
 - Notification Date: May 15, 2026
 - Birth: August 15, 2026
 - Monthly stipend will be paid until August 15, 2027 (or 12 months after the end of pregnancy)
- Monthly stipends will be paid by the USOPC or USA Fencing, as outlined in USA Fencing's [Athlete Support Criteria](#).
- Note: The athlete's points, but not ranking will be frozen allowing other athletes to qualify for higher funding categories. While the athlete's protected points remain unchanged, the overall ranking list will continue to update normally as other athletes earn new results. Protected ranking points will be displayed separately on ranking lists to indicate that the athlete is utilizing pregnancy or parental leave protections.

Monthly Direct Athlete Support (Parafencing)

- Starting in the first month after the athlete's last competition before birth, a monthly stipend will be paid through the duration of pregnancy and for an additional twelve (12) months following the birth or end of pregnancy (end of pregnancy refers to childbirth, miscarriage, stillbirth, or medical termination).
 - Monthly stipend amount:
 - The sum of the athlete's previous 12 months of DAS payments divided by 12.
 - For example:
 - Sum of previous 12 months of DAS payments = \$12,000; monthly stipend = \$1,000.
 - Last competition: May 15, 2026
 - Birth: August 15, 2026
 - Monthly stipend will be paid until August 15, 2027 (or 12 months after the end of pregnancy)

Elite Athlete Health Insurance

- If athlete is eligible for the USOPC's Elite Athlete Health Insurance as of the Notification Date, they will continue to receive EAHI from the USOPC as outlined in the USOPC's [Athlete Pregnancy and Support Resources Document](#).

Point Standings

- The athlete's points on the USA Fencing rolling points standings will be frozen as of the Notification Date.
 - The frozen points will remain in place through the duration of pregnancy and for an additional twelve (12) months following the birth or end of pregnancy.
 - Rolling Points:

- Upon the Return-to-Competition date, the athlete will be returned back to the rolling points list with their frozen point total. Newly earned results will replace frozen rolling points beginning with the lowest result and continuing in ascending order until all frozen points have been replaced. Group I and Group II results will remain separate and will be replaced within their respective groups.
 - Team Points (Able-Bodied only):
 - Upon the Return-to-Competition date, only points earned while actually competing at the events included in the current selection criteria can be included in athlete's Team Points total.
 - Selection to Designated Senior International Events:
 - If athlete was ranked in the top 8 (only US fencers included) on rolling points as of the Notification Date and does not naturally qualify for a Designated Senior International Event when Team points are used to select, they will automatically qualify for up to 6 events.
 - Protected ranking points established under this policy apply only to USA Fencing domestic ranking lists and athlete support determinations.
 - International rankings and Olympic/Paralympic qualification points will continue to be governed exclusively by FIE/WAS rules and regulations.
 - USA Fencing's protected ranking provisions will not alter or replace FIE/WAS world ranking points or Olympic/Paralympic qualification calculations.
 - However, when allocating available entries to international competitions that contribute to FIE/WAS rankings or Olympic/Paralympic qualification, USA Fencing may consider an athlete's protected domestic ranking and historical performance when determining discretionary entries or nominations as allowed by this policy and published selection criteria.

Selection to Senior & Para World Championships & Olympic/Paralympic Games

- Individual Event
 - Athletes returning to competition following pregnancy must qualify outright **according to the published selection criteria** for the next Senior & Para World Championships and Olympic/Paralympic Games Individual competitions.
- Team Event
 - Athletes returning to competition following pregnancy will be eligible for discretionary selection to the Senior World Championships and Olympic Games Team competitions, regardless of rank required by the relevant selection criteria.

6. Adoption, Surrogacy, and Non-Birth Parents

Monthly Direct Athlete Support

- The athlete's points (both USA Fencing and FIE/WAS) as of the Notification Date month will be frozen for funding purposes.
- If the athlete's points standings or funding category improves after the Notification Date based on results achieved after the Notification Date, the protected funding level will be adjusted upward accordingly.
- The athlete will continue to receive the same monthly stipend (or a higher stipend if applicable) for three (3) months from the Notification Date.
 - For example:
 - Notification Date: May 15, 2026
 - Monthly stipend will be paid until August 15, 2026
- Monthly stipends will be paid by the USOPC or USA Fencing, as outlined in USA Fencing's [Athlete Support Criteria](#).
- Athletes who may have become parents on January 1, 2026 or after will be eligible for the same benefits.
- Note: The athlete's points, but not ranking will be frozen allowing other athletes to qualify for higher funding categories. While the athlete's protected points remain unchanged, the overall ranking list will continue to update normally as other athletes earn new results. Protected ranking points will be displayed separately on ranking lists to indicate that the athlete is utilizing pregnancy or parental leave protections.

Elite Athlete Health Insurance

- If athlete is eligible for the USOPC's Elite Athlete Health Insurance as of the Notification Date, they will continue to receive EAHI from the USOPC as outlined in the USOPC's [Athlete Pregnancy and Support Resources Document](#).

Point Standings

- The athlete's points on the USA Fencing rolling points standings will be frozen as of the Notification Date.
 - The frozen points will remain in place for three (3) months following the Notification Date.
 - Rolling Points:
 - Upon the Return-to-Competition date, the athlete will be returned back to the rolling points list with their frozen point total. Newly earned results will replace frozen rolling points beginning with the lowest scoring result and continuing in ascending order until all frozen points have been replaced. Group I and Group II results will remain separate and will be replaced within their respective groups.

- Team Points:
 - Upon the Return-to-Competition date, only points earned while actually competing at the events included in the current selection criteria can be included in athlete's Team Points total.
 - Selection to Designated Senior International Events
 - If athlete was ranked in the top 8 (only US fencers included) on rolling points as of the Notification Date and does not naturally qualify for a Designated Senior International Event when Team points are used to select, they will automatically qualify for up to 3 events.
- Protected ranking points established under this policy apply only to USA Fencing domestic ranking lists and athlete support determinations.
 - International rankings and Olympic/Paralympic qualification points will continue to be governed exclusively by FIE/WAS rules and regulations.
 - USA Fencing's protected ranking provisions will not alter or replace FIE/WAS world ranking points or Olympic/Paralympic qualification calculations.
 - However, when allocating available entries to international competitions that contribute to FIE/WAS rankings or Olympic/Paralympic qualification, USA Fencing may consider an athlete's protected domestic ranking and historical performance when determining discretionary entries or nominations.

Selection to Senior World Championships & Olympic Games

- Athletes returning to competition must qualify outright for the next Senior World Championships and Olympic Games Individual and Team competitions based on the relevant selection criteria.

7. Childcare

Childcare benefits are available for all parents who are Olympic/Paralympic and/or Senior World Championship medalists.

- Competition Travel
 - USA Fencing will provide a caregiver travel reimbursement, up to the following maximum amounts, to support a designated caregiver accompanying the athlete to competitions.
 - Caregiver travel grants will be provided for the following competitions:
 - Designated World Cup or Grand Prix and training camps - \$500

- Zonal Championships - \$1000
- World Championships - \$1500
- Olympic/Paralympic Games - \$2000
 - Benefits will be provided up until the child's second birthday.
- General Childcare Stipend
 - USA Fencing will provide a monthly stipend of up to \$1,000/month to provide for general childcare services up to a maximum of \$24,000 per child (not to exceed 24 months of support).

Where both parents qualify for benefits under this policy in relation to the same child, financial support will be limited to one parent. The parents may designate which individual will receive the applicable benefits. In exceptional circumstances, USA Fencing may review requests for alternative arrangements.

8. Future Benefits

If additional athlete support benefits are introduced by USA Fencing in the future, the principles of this policy will apply to ensure equitable treatment of athletes utilizing pregnancy or parental leave protections.

9. Anti-Retaliation

Discrimination on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth, related medical conditions, or parental status is strictly prohibited. Athletes utilizing this policy will not be denied, excluded from, or treated unequally in funding, selection procedures, ranking considerations, training opportunities, or access to benefits.

10. Appeals and Grievance Process

Any athlete who believes that a decision or action under this policy has been applied incorrectly, inconsistently, or unfairly may seek review through USA Fencing's established grievance and complaint procedures.

This includes, but is not limited to, concerns related to the application of funding protections, ranking status, eligibility determinations, or access to training and competition opportunities.

Athletes are encouraged to raise concerns informally, where appropriate, to allow for timely resolution. However, use of informal processes is not required prior to initiating a formal grievance.

All complaints will be reviewed in accordance with applicable USA Fencing policies and procedures, and individuals utilizing this process will be protected from retaliation as outlined in this policy.