

# GUIDELINES – BEST PRACTICES for DISABILITY TRACK and FIELD

## Para Sport for High School Students

(Provided by USOC-Paralympic Track & Field)

### WHY?

What are the benefits of traditional sport? Teamwork, goal setting, commitment, physical activity, interaction outside of the classroom and persistence are just a few benefits that are regularly used to promote sport as an educational activity. Those same benefits are applicable to students with a disability.

Let's add a few more to the list of benefits: overcoming adversity—what better way to teach about overcoming adversity than having a disabled student on your squad; students who are different have a tendency to be bullied, but by being a part of sport, there is an increased self-worth; competitive nature—even if you are in a wheelchair, blind or have a hearing impairment, you have a competitive side.

### WHO?

Each state association may, in keeping with applicable laws, authorize exceptions to NFHS playing rules to provide reasonable accommodations to individual participants with disabilities and/or special needs, as well as those individuals with unique and extenuating circumstances. The accommodations should not fundamentally alter the sport, heighten risk to the athlete/others or place opponents at a disadvantage. (NFHS 2014 Track and Field Rules Book)

How will a state determine who is eligible? There are several different models to determine eligibility and minimal disability criteria. A sample from the Ohio High School Athletic Association is in the resource section.

### OPTIONS:

1. A wheelchair athlete is anyone with a Section 504 defined disability. A statement of disability must be on file with the school nurse or designated personnel responsible for student health issues- New Jersey, Washington, Minnesota, Alabama, Georgia, Maine, Louisiana are examples.
2. Uses the 2011 International Paralympic Committee (IPC) Classification Rules and Regulations Manual and OHSAA reserves the right to update and modify these standards at any time and without notice. Ohio has developed a protest and appeals process to determine eligibility questions.
3. A Para-ambulatory participant shall have a permanent orthopedic, neuromuscular or other physical disability. An ambulatory division which would include Visually Impaired, Cerebral Palsy, Dwarf and Amputees. Permanent orthopedic impairment shall be verified by a licensed physician and maintained on permanent file at the school- Louisiana

Notice that Louisiana has developed an ambulatory division which would include visually impaired, cerebral palsy, dwarf and amputee athletes.

\*There are other states that also sanction wheelchair events.



### **BEST PRACTICES:**

1. A permanent disability
2. Record on file with the school
3. Verification of the disability

The IPC has a very detailed classification system, which is not feasible for a high school system to use. We encourage the high school community to look at generic classifications of wheelchair and ambulatory for their disability program.



### **WHAT EVENTS ARE OFFERED?**

Every state is different in their offering of events. What are your state rules for traditional athletes? Is there a limit to the number of events that an athlete can compete in?

### **OPTIONS:**

1. Washington and Minnesota allow an athlete to compete in any event, but the athlete must select four events between track and field events offered at the state meet.
2. Other states determine a slate of events with a sprint, middle distance, distance and what throws will be offered.

The program should have a minimum of three track events and at least one field event, but the actual selection of the event schedule is determined by each state.

### **BEST PRACTICES:**

1. Events – gender separated
2. Minimum of three track events and one field event
3. Field Events- wheelchair /ambulatory athletes can throw shot, discus and javelin. Ambulatory also compete in LJ, HJ and TJ in the IPC arena.



### **COMPETITION MODELS**

Two basic models exist for competition with multiple options in each area. The scoring model below is an “equal access” model which also has a variety of options.

### **OPTIONS:**

1. Inclusion:
  - Athletes compete at dual, group, and at the state level, but do not deliver points to their team to win a meet
  - Athletes can achieve track and field high school letters through a published procedure
  - Athletes invited to the state meet based on a timed final or field event performances
  - Athletes do not achieve points, but do receive medals and can set state records
2. Scoring:
  - Athletes achieve track and field high school letters through scoring points
  - Athlete can score points for their high school team
  - Team can score points from disabled athletes
  - Athlete can score points at state, receive medals and set state records.

### **BEST PRACTICES:**

A scoring model is a fully integrated model. The para-athlete is a contributing member to the team. The scoring model encourages coaches and schools to recruit athletes into their program. There are many options in the scoring model for a state to choose from.

### **SCORING MODEL OPTIONS:**

1. Based on athlete numbers:
  - A. Points given based on the total number of participants (MN, LA, ID, ME)
    - i. The one plus one – a single athlete would receive a point (or the number determined by the state) and medal  
Two athletes – 1 point and 1 medal, three athletes – 2 athletes get points and medals, etc.
    - ii. Scoring would be based on the system used by the state in the traditional model if full heats or flights exist
2. Based on achieving a minimum standard:
  - A. Athlete has to achieve a minimum standard in the competition in order to achieve a point (WA, NC). This is used to encourage a high level of competition.
3. Student athletes participating in the wheelchair events within the wheelchair division receive points (GA).

### **ADVANCEMENT TO THE STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS OPTIONS:**

1. Ranking list – top eight athletes invited to the state meet
2. Qualify through the state's traditional model
3. Meet a qualifying standard during the course of the season (time frame and type of meet to be defined)



Based on numbers of participants, the competitions may need to be held at set time and day within the state meet structure as opposed to within the time schedule of a class or division.

### **DETERMINATION OF TEAM CHAMPIONSHIPS OPTIONS:**

1. A team trophy given to traditional teams and one for the combined scores of the disabled athletes and the traditional athletes from the same school (WA)
2. If the points scored by a disabled athlete enable his/her team to tie or exceed the highest team point total of another team(s), then the team with disabled athlete will be declared the co-champion and the other team(s) without the disabled athlete will be declared the outright champion. This applies to the runner-up position as well as the regular season, district, regional and state meet. (LA)
3. Traditional system of awarding team trophies based on the combination of traditional and disabled athlete points.

### **BEST PRACTICES:**

1. Points for athletes competing at all levels
2. Wear school uniform
3. Meet high school eligibility requirements (may be modification on age, due to previous surgeries or illness)
4. The athlete is responsible for all equipment

### **WAIVER OPTION:**

Due to the limited amount of competition against other athletes or the limited amount of expert coaching, some states might allow athletes to attend competitions, camps or clinics under the auspices of USA Paralympic Track and Field.

### **COMPETITION RULES**

#### Wheelchair Racing Basic Rules

1. The racing chair shall have two large wheels (not to exceed 70cm in diameter) and one small wheel (not to exceed 50cm in diameter)
2. No part of the racing chair may protrude behind the vertical plane of the back edge of the rear tires nor extend in front of the center of the front wheel hub
3. One push rim allowed for each large wheel
4. Mirrors are not allowed
5. It is the responsibility of the athlete to ensure that no part of his/her lower limbs can fall from the wheelchair to the ground or track during an event
6. The racing chair must be manually-propelled (no gears, levers or electronic steering)
7. No delay due to equipment failure
8. Athlete must have a racing helmet that is a hard protective shell and recognized with an international safety standard
9. Athlete can use racing gloves(soft or hard gloves).

Video clip of a wheelchair race: <http://www.paralympic.org/video/athletics-womens-800m-t54-final-2013-ipc-athletics-world-championships-lyon>

Video clip (1 minute) of high school students competing in wheelchair track and field events at the GHSA state meet: <http://vimeo.com/21810480>

#### *Optional Wheelchair Racing Rules*

1. Traditional and wheelchair athletes racing together  
This is appropriate at dual meets or when there is only one wheelchair athlete. This is the decision of the meet director.
  - a. Laned races (100, 200, 400)—in laned races wheelchair athlete must stay within their lanes, as do traditional athletes.
    1. Give the wheelchair athlete the inside lane, if there is a concern. Athletes must follow lane restrictions in both traditional and wheelchair track and field. No interference should occur due to the lane restriction. Ask all athletes to stay in their lanes even as they cross the finish line (particularly 200 and 400).
    2. The wheelchair athlete is competing against his/her own time and not displacing the traditional athlete.

3. Same concept if there are multiple wheelchair athletes and only one traditional athlete.
- b. Non-Laned races (800, 1500, 3200)
  1. If combined, wheelchair athletes start in the outside lane or behind the runners.
  2. Combining can be done safely if all athletes are aware of their surroundings.
  3. States have developed policies for a lane boundary between the traditional athletes and wheelchair athletes—while the wheelchair athletes travel farther in these policies, it does allow for combined competition. After the break line, wheelchair athletes may only go into Lane 3. This is not considered a best practice.
  4. Passing rules are the same. Neither runner nor wheelchair athlete can impede any athlete while passing or being passed.
2. Two or more wheelchair athletes should compete against each other, as it does provide a like competition.

### Wheelchair Throwing Basic Rules

1. Athletes should throw from a “true seated” position
2. The high school athlete options are:
  - a. Manual wheelchair
  - b. Power wheelchair
  - c. Throwing chair – used for safety and optimal performance, but takes time to set up. (Top photo shows the chair and ratchet straps and L-brackets over an existing cement ring). Typically, stakes are used in the ground to hold the throwing chair in place.
3. The uppermost part of the cushion or seat may not exceed 75cm, which was determined to be an average hip height.
4. If the athlete is using a holding bar, it must be rigid and without joints.
5. If using a throwing chair, athlete will throw all six throws consecutively.
6. The throwing frame must have a seat that is square or rectangular in shape with each side at least 30 cm in length. The front of the seat cannot be lower than the back. Both legs must be in contact with the seat surface from the back of the knee to the back of the buttocks.
7. The seated position must be maintained throughout the throwing action and the implement marked.
8. The frame cannot extend over the toe board.
9. A coach is the only person who can assist the athlete in the ring.



### *Optional Wheelchair Throwing Rules*

1. Weight of implement
  - a. Shot – Recommend 4 kg for boys and 6 lb for girls due to physical limitations of the athlete
  - b. Discus – 1 kg for both genders
  - c. Javelin – whatever the high school weight is in that state  
or
  - d. Implements should be the same weight as all other male and female participants.
2. Two classes in the throws (optional) (MN, FL, GA)
  - a. Class 1 athletes with any disability of the lower extremities (spinal cord injury, amputation, spina bifida, cerebral palsy, etc.)
  - b. Class 2 athletes with any disability that affects lower and upper extremities (cervical spinal, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, traumatic brain injury (TBI)).

Video clip of a seated throw: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xGIhxnWk3w>

Designs for seated throwing chairs can be found at: <http://www.teamusa.org/US-Paralympics/Sports/Track-and-Field/Coaches-Education>. The design plans will be updated as they are submitted.

### **AMBULATORY ATHLETES**

Many ambulatory athletes do not require special modifications in training or in competition. This will be a state issue regarding the implementation of sections for ambulatory athletes. The ambulatory para-athletes must choose to compete in para division or the traditional division at beginning of season. Many of these athletes have the ability to compete with their traditional counterparts, and have already been doing so within the traditional model.

Athletes with limitations or special requirements (blind, severe cases of cerebral palsy, dwarf) under the rules, should be considered for a para section.

#### Visually Impaired Athletes

1. May use a guide runner to assist them, either tethered or non-tethered. Those athletes needing guide runners (blind or severely-restricted vision) will need a lane for the athlete and one for the guide.
2. The athlete who is blind is required to wear an eye mask.

#### Deaf Athletes

While deaf athletes are currently not a part of the Paralympic movement, they are part of another population that will require minor modifications.

1. For track events, the athlete should be in a lane so that he/she can see the starter or starter assistant. The starter may assign a person to drop a red cloth when the gun sounds or tap the athlete from behind.
2. Strobe lights that work simultaneously with the starting pistol may be used.
3. For field events, the official should make sure that the athlete knows the rotation order, but point out who is in the order ahead of the athlete. This can be done by showing him/her the flight sheet.

Video clip explaining the athlete and guide process: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G4uvoSpyXW4>

## **OFFICIATING**

USA Track and Field official certification offers an additional endorsement for Para Track and Field Officials. To be eligible, the official must be an Association level official and take the online certification. The certification can be offered by the Association or found at: <http://www.teamusa.org/US-Paralympics/Sports/Track-and-Field/Officials-Training>.



## **RESOURCES:**

### **Racing Equipment:**

Eagle Sport Chairs- <http://www.eaglesportschairs.com/>

Top End- <http://www.topendwheelchair.com/>

Local Providers for Loaner Equipment- <http://findaclub.usparalympics.org/>

### **Throwing Chairs:**

Eagle Sport Chairs- <http://www.eaglesportschairs.com/>

Blueprints for building chairs- <http://www2.teamusa.org/US-Paralympics/Sports/Track-and-Field/Coaches-Education>

### **Education**

- a. Coaching Education- <http://www2.teamusa.org/US-Paralympics/Sports/Track-and-Field/Coaches-Education>
- b. Videos
  1. Paralympic Sport TV- <http://www.paralympic.org/Videos>
  2. <http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=Youtube-+Paralympic+Track+and+Field&qv=Youtube-+Paralympic+Track+and+Field&FORM=VDRE>

**Sample paperwork-** Ohio High School Athletic Association

<http://www.ohsaa.org/news/sports/2012-06-13WheelerchairTF.pdf>

### **Diagram for Throwing Chair**

<http://www2.teamusa.org/US-Paralympics/Sports/Track-and-Field/Coaches-Education>

Throwing Chair Diagram 1 is considered a legal throwing chair under the 2014 rules. We will add additional blueprints as they become available.

Please review the changes in Rule 35.1 on the above website



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