

EVIDENCE INFORMED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF CLASSIFICATION BY NATIONAL SPORT ORGANIZATIONS

Prepared for the Ontario Parasport Collective



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Canadian Disability Participation Project
Le projet canadien sur la participation sociale
des personnes en situation de handicap

PREFACE

OVERVIEW

This report was prepared for the Ontario Parasport Collective. The recommendations provide guidance to National Sport Organizations on how to effectively manage Para athlete classification.

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CONTACT INFORMATION

Inquiries can be directed to the Canadian Disability Participation Project at <https://cdpp.ca/contact>.

WEBSITE

This report will be available online at <https://cdpp.ca>.

QUICK GUIDE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS

This document outlines seven best practice recommendations national sport organizations can implement to effectively manage of para-athlete classification. The purpose of this document is to provide sport administrators with guidance on how to implement the recommendations so they may support members of the Paralympic Movement, from athletes to coaches, in learning about and effectively navigating the classification system.

WHAT DO THE RECOMMENDATIONS INVOLVE?

NSOs are free to implement any or all of the seven recommendations in whichever order they choose. Guidance on how to decide which recommendations should be implemented, and in what order, is provided in the following section.

FORMAT OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS:

Each recommendation is supported with the following information:

- **Who** should put the recommendation into action
- **How** to put the recommendation into action
- **When** to put the recommendation into action (this may be decided by the NSO)
- **Example Information** strategies to use and content to include when implementing the recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS

THE SEVEN RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Sport Organizations must have the financial and human resources to support athlete classification.
2. Sport administrators will undergo disability awareness training.
3. Sport organizations must develop and describe a classification pathway for athletes that aligns with the sport's strategic plan and/or model of athlete development.
4. Sport organizations must develop and describe a classifier pathway in alignment with their classification pathway.
5. Sport administrators will undergo training that outlines the classification process for their sport.
6. Sport administrators will understand the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in classification.
7. Sport administrators must demonstrate or be trained in strong communication and conflict resolution skills.

RECOMMENDATION #1: SPORT ORGANATIONS MUST HAVE THE FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES TO SUPPORT ATHLETE CLASSIFICATION

Who should put this recommendation into action:

- National sport organizations must ensure all administrative staff and volunteers have the capacity to access all trainings described herein and enact relevant changes or implement new practices to reflect these recommendations.
- All sport administrators must have access to the following trainings and be responsible for enacting relevant changes or implementing new practices to reflect these recommendations.

How should this recommendation be implemented:

- Human and financial resources may be designated for classification within in a sport's strategic plan and on an ongoing basis.

Examples of financial and human resources dedicated to supporting athlete classification:

- Financial resources
 - Funding specific to accessing classification events - e.g., travel, registration; funding to support classifier training)
- Human resources
 - Additional staff persons
 - Time provided to staff during onboarding or ongoing training to access trainings described within this document.
 - Job descriptions reflective of the skills and competencies

RECOMMENDATION #2: SPORT ADMINISTRATORS WILL UNDERGO DISABILITY AWARENESS TRAINING

Who should put this recommendation into action:

- Disability awareness training programs should be developed by those with lived experience of disability and subject-matter experts (e.g., academics, athletes)
- All administrative staff and volunteers within an NSO will be required to complete this training.

How should this recommendation be implemented:

- Sport administrators must access this training as a part of their onboarding with a new organization and bi-annually (may be embedded within an organization's quadrennial plan) or provide proof of equivalent training or professional development.

Examples of how disability awareness training can be delivered:

- Format and location (e.g., online vs in person) can be sport-specific
- Content can include general information, such as information on inclusive language and the various models of disability.
- Content must be tailored to a given sport – e.g., it must describe the impairments most commonly present within a sport along with relevant secondary conditions, mobility aids, etc.

RECOMMENDATION #3: SPORT ORGANIZATIONS MUST DEVELOP AND DESCRIBE A CLASSIFICATION PATHWAY FOR ATHLETES THAT ALIGNS WITH THE SPORT'S STRATEGIC PLAN AND/OR MODEL OF ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT.

Who should put this recommendation into action:

- The classification pathway will be determined by a given sport's leadership team and sport-specific classification experts (e.g., administrative head of classification, classifiers, and former athletes with international classification experience).
- This pathway should be readily accessible to those within and outside of the Paralympic Movement (e.g., sport administrators, coaches, potential athletes, etc.)

How should this recommendation be implemented:

- A classification pathway should be developed and published on an NSO's website prior to further sport-specific classification resources being developed.

Examples of the types of information to be included in a classification pathway:

- At what stage of an athlete's development should they undergo classification.
 - Consider the levels of classification within the sport: provincial, national, or international.
 - Considering the athlete's stage of development including their: age, length of time post-injury, level of training and competition

- For youth athletes, identify when the athlete becomes the primary contact for classification rather than their parent or guardian.
- Whether classification is reserved for high-performing athletes (i.e., is a part of a performance pathway), or is available to all athletes (i.e., is a part of a participation pathway).
- How classification aligns with the NSO's strategic plan

RECOMMENDATION #4: SPORT ORGANIZATIONS MUST DEVELOP AND DESCRIBE A CLASSIFIER PATHWAY THAT ALIGNS WITH THE SPORT'S CLASSIFICATION PATHWAY.

Who should put this recommendation into action:

- The classification pathway will be determined by a given sport's leadership team and sport-specific classification experts (e.g., administrative head of classification, classifiers, and former athletes with international classification experience).
- This pathway should be readily accessible to those within and outside of the Paralympic Movement (e.g., sport administrators, potential classifiers etc.)

How should this recommendation be implemented:

- A classifier pathway should be developed and published on an NSO's website alongside their classification pathway.

Examples of the types of information to be included in a classifier pathway:

- When, where, and how interested individuals may become classifiers.
- Prerequisite skills/certifications for classifiers
- Costs associated with training and financial support available from the NSO
- Length of time to national/international certification
 - E.g., X number of hours under observation

RECOMMENDATION #5: SPORT ADMINISTRATORS WILL UNDERGO TRAINING THAT OUTLINES THE CLASSIFICATION PROCESS FOR THEIR SPORT.

Who should put this recommendation into action:

- This information will be developed by sport-specific classification experts (e.g., lead classifier, former internationally classified athletes)
- NSO support is required to ensure staff compliance in completing/maintaining this training (e.g., by offering time in the employee's schedule to complete the training).
- All sport administrators within an organization must complete this training.

How should this recommendation be implemented:

- Classification processes may be outlined in a self-paced online or printed manual available during organizational onboarding.
- This training should be updated bi-annually and as needed to reflect changes to the classification system.

Examples of the types of information to be included in this instructional manual:

- A clear definition of the purpose of classification
- A comprehensive timeline for classification (see recommendation #3, PAGE NUMBER)
- Average length of time to classification
- Description of the paperwork required for an athlete to be classified
- Typical assessment procedures used during classification;
- How to support an athlete when responding to an unexpected classification outcome
 - E.g., interpersonal skills required to support the athlete
 - E.g., appeal and protest procedures

RECOMMENDATION #6: SPORT ADMINISTRATORS WILL UNDERSTAND THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALL PARTIES INVOLVED IN CLASSIFICATION.

Who should put this recommendation into action:

- Classification experts (e.g., parasport lead, head classifier) within a sport will be responsible for compiling and maintaining this information.
- NSO support is required to ensure staff compliance in maintaining this reference manual.
 - E.g., By offering X hrs/year to update competency in this area or adding a line to future job descriptions.
- All sport administrators within an NSO must gain access this reference manual.

How should this recommendation be implemented:

- Information may be outlined in a self-paced online or printed manual available to administrators on an ongoing basis and during organizational onboarding.
- This reference manual should be updated bi-annually and as needed to reflect changes to the classification system or staff.

Examples of the types of information sport administrators should understand and have access to:

- Contact information for those responsible for handling classification inquiries at the CPC and a given sport's international federation.
- Contact information for the NSO's lead classifier.
- Description of classifiers' roles and responsibilities within the NSO
 - Education and outreach,
 - Domestic classification,
 - Liaising with international federations and/or the IPC
- Description of sport administrators' responsibilities related to classification.
 - What paperwork sport administrators are responsible for filing,
 - The timelines for registering athletes for classification at key events,
 - Communication and interpersonal skills required to interact with athletes.
- Information on where to direct individuals interested in becoming classifiers and the pathway to becoming a certified classifier (see recommendation #4).
- The roles and responsibilities of coaches (personal and team) during classification.

- Pre-/during-/post-classification responsibilities
- The roles and responsibilities of athletes during classification.
 - Pre-/during-/post-classification rights and responsibilities, such as pursuing medical documentation of their impairment, arriving at classification well-rested and prepared to exercise, their right to ask questions of during classification.
- The roles and responsibilities of parents/guardians of youth athletes
 - Pre-/during-/post-classification responsibilities such as pursuing medical documentation of their child's impairment, communicating with coaches and classifiers on behalf of their child during classification.

RECOMMENDATION #7: SPORT ADMINISTRATORS MUST DEMONSTRATE OR BE TRAINED IN STRONG COMMUNICATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS.

Who should put this recommendation into action:

- Communication and conflict resolution training must be developed and delivered by experts in the field.
- Communication and conflict resolution training must be made available to all staff within an NSO.
- All staff and volunteers should be screened for communication and conflict resolution skills during the hiring process.

How should this recommendation be implemented:

- Strong communication and conflict resolution skills should be advertised for in all job descriptions.
- Interview questions and reference checks should highlight applicant's communication and conflict resolution skills. As well, proof of certification or training in communication and conflict resolution should be preferentially screened for during application processes.
- Training processes may be sport-specific and range from online modules to in person training sessions provided during organizational onboarding.
- External training opportunities should be made available to current employees to enhance their communication and conflict resolution skills.

Examples of strong communication and conflict resolution skills to be used when interacting with athletes (their parents), classifiers, and coaches:

- Strong written and verbal communication skills,
- Understanding of confidentiality,
- Use of person-first language,
- The ability to navigate conflict and come to a mutually agreed upon resolution,
- Empathy, respect and sensitivity towards others and their individual psycho-emotional wellbeing