

The MHSAA track and field committee has recommended that an adaptive track and field category be established for the 2022 season in Michigan. The Houghton Portage Township Public School Athletic Department proposed the following standards for high school para-ambulatory and wheelchair divisions in track and field for all schools in Michigan, and Michigan's WestPAC conference already used a version of these rules to successfully field an adaptive category during the 2021 track and field season.

This proposal has been assembled in collaboration with Adaptive Track & Field USA (ATFUSA) and current and past high-school para-athletes. ATFUSA has successfully worked with many states to establish these rules and accommodations and they generally meet international standards for Paralympic-class competition with some modifications to account for the limited pool of competitors in high school adaptive track and field. **These rules can be immediately adopted by any athletic conference in Michigan to prepare for adaptive athlete competition in the 2022 track and field season.** Contact [iamanathletetoo@gmail.com](mailto:iamanathletetoo@gmail.com) for more support and information on how to implement these rules.

Notes on terminology:

- *Para-athlete* and *adaptive athlete* are used interchangeably.
- Para-athletes include athletes with intellectual and/or physical disabilities who meet these qualifying standards and choose to compete using these standards.
- *Para-ambulatory* refers to para-athletes who have a qualifying disability, choose to compete using these standards, but do not compete in a wheelchair.
- References to "other" athletes are those athletes who do not have a qualifying disability or those with disabilities who choose not to compete in the para-ambulatory or wheelchair divisions.

## **Procedures for Indoor and Outdoor Wheelchair & Para-Ambulatory Track and Field Divisions in Michigan Schools**

Para-ambulatory and wheelchair track and field athletes will adhere to all Michigan High School Athletic Association, Inc. (MHSAA) eligibility and athletic rules with the exceptions defined here.

- 1) Special accommodations for the para-ambulatory and wheelchair divisions: Schools are required to apply for a special accommodation for each student competing in either the wheelchair or para-ambulatory track & field divisions. The request shall include medical documentation that meets classification criteria as a para-athlete under the World Para Athletics (WPA) rules (WPA classification is not required – see accommodation requirements in Appendix). MHSAA approval is required for the student to participate in either the wheelchair or para-ambulatory indoor and/or outdoor track and field divisions. Accommodations will include the following:
  - a) If only one para-ambulatory or wheelchair athlete is present for an outdoor event, then they will start with the other competitors, but compete in their own division. In indoor track and field, wheelchair athletes would race in a heat by themselves (based on recommendations of the ATFUSA and the MHSAA Association Indoor Track and Field

Committee). If two or more para-athletes are competing, then they will race at the same time in a separate heat (para-ambulatory or wheelchair separately) from the other competitors.

- b) In all laned events, the wheelchair athlete will be given one lane to compete, and if possible, have one lane open between the wheelchair and the other competitors.
- c) In non-laned races the wheelchair athlete will start in the outside lane or behind the other competitors (starting in lane 1).
- d) In field events the wheelchair athlete may use a field throwing frame (see appendix for equipment standards) set up by an assistant.
- e) In indoor track and field, the wheelchair athlete will race on a banked or flat track based on the host site safety rules and regulations.
- f) Athletes with substantially low vision will run track with a guide in two lanes, connected by a WPA-defined tether following WPA rule accommodations.
- g) For field events, blind athletes can have an aid position the athlete in the field ring and have an aid safely in the vector providing direction instructions per the current WPA rules.

2) Scoring

- a) A para-athlete will compete against the same gender for individual honors. The para-athlete will vie for team honors within their respective classification and gender.
- b) *[To be aligned with MHSAA to match the current MHSAA point system as closely as possible.]* When a para-athlete competes against another para-athlete of the same gender and finishes first, two points will be awarded to his/her team. The second-place finisher receives one team point. If three para-athletes participate, then the points will be awarded three, two and one. This scoring system will continue as illustrated in the table below.

Number of Para-athletes in heat	Points awarded per place
1	1 for first place
2	2 for first place, 1 for second
3	3, 2, 1
4	4, 3, 2, 1
N<11	N, N-1, N-2, N-3, N-4...N-9

- c) If the Para-athlete is competing solo, then they shall compete against an event standard time/distance (see part 4). They will be awarded one team point for meeting or exceeding the standards for that event.

- 3) Standards: The following standards will be used to determine qualifying and earning points for the athlete's teams when only one athlete is competing. These standards are derived from the standards and results of the Adaptive Track and Field USA Database [www.atfusa.org](http://www.atfusa.org) which has over 30 years of data and agreed to by MHSAA.

**Outdoor Track and Field Time/Distance Standards:**

<b>Event</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Wheelchair</b>	<b>Ambulatory</b>
100 M	Female	40.0	33.0
100 M	Male	29.0	27.0
200 M	Female	1:03.4	49.0
200 M	Male	51.8	40.0
400 M	Female	2:09.0	2:04
400 M	Male	1:40.0	1:35
800 M	Female	4:00.0	4:13
800 M	Male	3:19	3:46
1600 M	Female	7:00	11:05
1600 M	Male	6:00	10:05
3200 M	Female	13:20.0	21:30
3200 M	Male	12:00.0	19:30
Shot Put	Female	7 feet	9 feet
Shot Put	Male	9 feet	11 feet
Discus	Female	22 feet	24 feet
Discus	Male	23 feet	25 feet
Javelin	Female	16 feet	14 feet
Javelin	Male	29 feet	24 feet
Long Jump	Female		4'
Long Jump	Male		5'7"
High Jump	Female		1m
High Jump	Male		1m

**Indoor Track and Field Time/Distance Standards:**

<b>Event</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Wheelchair</b>	<b>Ambulatory</b>
55 M	Female	30.0	17.0
55 M	Male	20.0	14.0
300 M	Female	1:40	1:31

300 M	Male	1:20	1:12
600 M	Female	3:20	3:06
600 M	Male	2:40	2:23
1000 M	Female	5:18	5:30
1000 M	Male	4:25	4:00
1600 M	Female	7:20	11:30
1600 M	Male	6:20	10:30
3200 M	Female	14:00	22:00
3200 M	Male	12:40	20:00
Shot Put	Female	7 ft	9 ft
Shot Put	Male	9 ft	11 ft
High Jump	Female		1m
High Jump	Male		1m

#### 4) Equipment

##### a) Wheelchair:

- i) Track: Athletes may race in their regular (day) wheelchair or a racing wheelchair. When using a racing wheelchair, the chair will conform to the current World Para Athletics (WPA) specifications (described in the appendix).
- ii) Field: Athletes may compete in either their regular (day) wheelchair if the seat is equal to or lower than 75cm, or from a field throwing frame which conforms to the current WPA standards (described in the appendix). Either the regular wheelchair or the field throwing frame must be completely within the ring while competing.

##### b) Para-ambulatory:

- i) Track: Para-ambulatory athletes shall race unassisted, i.e., para-athletes must race without crutches, walker, or other assistive devices, with the exception of a frame runner (see below). Leg or arm prosthetics are allowed, as well as non-electronic ankle foot orthotics (AFO).
- ii) Track: A Para-ambulatory athlete can choose to utilize a running frame, as allowed by the World Para Athletics (WPA) specifications. Frame Running is an athletic discipline where the athletes run on their feet while using a three-wheeled running frame to support their bodies. The Frame Runner has support from a saddle, a body support plate, and handlebars used for steering. There are no pedals attached to the frame (described further in appendix).
- iii) Field: Para-ambulatory athletes shall compete unassisted, i.e. para-athletes must compete without crutches, walker, or other assistive devices. Leg or arm prosthetics are allowed as well as AFOs.

## Appendix:

### 1) Track Equipment:

- a) A wheelchair para-athlete shall compete in track events in a manually operated (no gears) wheelchair that meets specifications as follows or the current WPA rules:
  - i) A track racing wheelchair shall have no more than two large wheels and one small wheel. A standard (day) wheelchair may have two large wheels and up to two small wheels. In all competitions, the small wheel/s must be at the front of the chair.
  - ii) All wheelchairs must have a functional braking system for safety purposes.
  - iii) No mechanical gears or levers for propelling the wheelchair.
  - iv) The use of mirrors is not permitted.
  - v) Only hand operated, mechanical steering devices are allowed.
  - vi) In all races the athlete must be able to turn the front wheel(s) manually both to the left and to the right.
  - vii) No part of the main body (defined as the vertical plane of the back edge and wheels including the seat) of the wheelchair may extend forwards beyond the hub of the front wheel or be wider than the inside of the hubs of the two rear wheels.
  - viii) The maximum height from the ground to the main body of the wheelchair shall be 50 cm.
  - ix) No part of the wheelchair may protrude behind the vertical plane of the back edge of the rear tires.
  - x) The maximum diameter of the large wheel including the inflated tire shall not exceed 70 cm. The maximum diameter of the small wheel including the inflated tire shall not exceed 50 cm.
  - xi) Only one plain, round, push-rim is allowed for each large wheel.
  - xii) The use of fairings or similar devices for the purpose of improving aerodynamic performance of the athlete in the wheelchair are not permitted.
  - xiii) No element of the wheelchair or its attachments or accessories may incorporate energy storing capacity (e.g. elasticity) for the purpose of enhancing performance.

### b) Frame Runner

- i) The frame has two rear wheels and one front wheel.
- ii) Maximum length 200cm, maximum width 95cm (outside the two rear wheels).
- iii) Front-wheel size: up to 63.5cm or 25inches. Rear-wheel size: up to 68.5cm or 27 inches.
- iv) The saddle may have other shapes than the traditional type of racing cycling saddle.
- v) The body support plate may be individually shaped to provide optimal stability.
- vi) The body may be strapped to the plate with a belt or orthopedic brace.
- vii) The handlebars should ensure that the athlete can race and maneuver safely.
- viii) A compensator system controlling the front wheel is highly recommended.
- ix) Hands may be strapped to the handlebars.

- x) If the athlete can use a brake, it should be installed.
  - xi) No mechanical gear or engine is allowed.
- 2) Field Equipment:
- a) Para-ambulatory and wheelchair athletes may throw from a standing position, or they may choose to throw from a seated position using his/her wheelchair or a throwing frame.
  - b) The size of the discus, shot, and javelin shall be the same as for all other male and female participants.
  - c) Seated para-athletes must throw from a wheelchair or frame that meets the following standards or the current WPA specifications:
    - i) The throwing frame sitting surface including the cushion must not exceed 75 cm in height.
    - ii) The seat may be square or rectangular with minimum dimensions of 30 x 30 cm (12 inches x 12 inches).
    - iii) The frame or wheelchair shall be anchored with straps to stakes in the ground. The stakes and straps may be in or outside of the throwing circle.
    - iv) If the frame has a holding bar, it must be fixed (no articulating joints) and rigid (no flex).
    - v) The para-athlete may use non-elastic straps to anchor their body into the chair.
    - vi) No part of the throwing frame or wheelchair may be outside the circumference of the circle. The athlete's foot or arm may be outside the throwing circle.
    - vii) Seated para-athletes must compete with both feet off the ground.
    - viii) The athlete must remain in a seated position from the butt bone to the back of the knees from the initiation of the throw until the implement touches the Ground.
- 3) Eligibility:
- a) Athletes with a temporary disability, e.g. broken bones and other healing injuries, are not eligible to participate in the para-athlete division.
  - b) Any athlete already identified and classified by World Para Athletics (WPA) automatically qualifies for the para division, i.e. WPA Classes 11-13, 20, 31-38, 40-47, 51-58, 61-64.
  - c) WPA classification is not required for participation or competition. Athletes lacking WPA classification may submit medical documentation which verifies a permanent disability to qualify as a para-athlete in K-12 sports. WPA classification will be the deciding factor in cases of qualification disputes.
  - d) Wheelchair Division: All wheelchair athletes will compete in a single open male or female wheelchair division regardless of the type of disability (wheelchair results will not be subdivided by WPA classification). Some examples of disabilities which qualify an athlete for the wheelchair division include:
    - i) Impaired muscle power (spinal cord injury, spina bifida, polio, etc.)
    - ii) Impaired passive range of motion (arthrogryposis, joint fusion, etc.)

- iii) Athletes with abnormal tone involvement, e.g., Cerebral Palsy and spinal cord injuries which result in hypertonia, ataxia, and/or athetosis.
- iv) Lower limb amputees who choose to compete seated.
- e) Para-Ambulatory Division: All athletes will compete in a single open male or female para-ambulatory division regardless of the type of disability. Some examples of permanent disabilities which qualify athletes for the para-ambulatory division include:
  - i) Amputee - Leg (track or field) or arm at the elbow or higher (field and track up to 400m) wearing a prosthetic.
  - ii) Impaired passive range of motion, limb deficiency, leg length difference, or athletes with disabilities which appear to have movement limitations, but not wearing a prosthetic.
  - iii) Short stature (achondroplasia, etc.)
  - iv) Visual impairments diagnosed by an ophthalmologist and sufficient medical documentation to support classification by WPA. Those with significant sight loss will run with a guide.
  - v) Intellectual impairment that limits activity - Athletes need to receive a T20 classification from Athletes without Limits (can be completed based on documentation/consultation). <https://www.athleteswithoutlimits.org/eligibility>
  - vi) Athletes with abnormal tone involvement, e.g., Cerebral Palsy and spinal cord injuries which result in hypertonia, ataxia, and/or athetosis.

## Frequently Asked Questions:

### **Is a para-division fair for all athletes?**

Adding a para-division to track and field is no different than having a male and female division. Adaptive athletes compete against either a standard or other adaptive athletes, and having a para-division in no way changes the integrity or the level of competition of the sport. A Para-division includes far more students in athletics than were able to participate before, so actually vastly improves the experience of track and field for everyone. The number of points scored for an individual team by an adaptive athlete directly correlates to the number of para-athletes participating in the event from all participating schools (e.g. if only one team has an adaptive athlete, the maximum that athlete could score per event is 1 point). The more teams that have adaptive athletes, the more points those adaptive athletes are potentially able to score (see scoring chart above under section #2). This encourages high school teams to recruit para-athletes as valuable competitive assets, while maintaining fairness to teams that might not have a para-athlete.

### **Will there be a significant cost to implement a para-division?**

Athletes are responsible for obtaining their own racing chairs for competition. There are loaner programs and grant opportunities for such athletes, such as the Challenged Athlete Foundation and the Kelly Brush Foundation. For field events, a field chair is recommended but not required. Implements such as shot put and discus are the same as used by other athletes. **The cost to implement a para-division for member schools is negligible.**

<https://www.challengedathletes.org/resources/>

<https://kellybrushfoundation.org/theactivefund/>

<https://www.moveunitedsport.org/ability-equipped-athlete-equipment-grant-application>

### **Are there increased safety concerns when including athletes with disabilities?**

A physical by a medical professional, clearing the athlete for participation in sports, is required before participation, as is MHSAA policy for all athletes. The American Association of Adapted Sports Programs has put out additional guidance on facilitating safety.

<https://adaptedsports.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/First-Aid-brochure-final.pdf>

### **How do we coach adaptive athletes?**

Several organizations offer training and mentorship for coaching of para-athletes, including the ATFUSA, the Challenged Athlete Foundation, and the Great Lakes Adaptive Sports Association.

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

<https://www.glasa.org/sports-programs/inclusion/>

<https://www.challengedathletes.org/hsadaptivesports/>

### **How do we officiate adaptive athletes?**

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://atfusa.org/OFFICIALS/Officials.htm>. ATFUSA offers training and mentorship for officiating events with para-athletes.

### **Is special transportation required?**

Para-athletes on Individualized Education Plans (as well as some 504 plans), have transportation for school events already established, and those accommodations would need to be followed for athletics as well.

### **Has this model been used as a pilot program here in Michigan?**

Thirty-five other states have already implemented para-divisions over the course of the past 20 to 30 years. There is a wealth of data and experience easily available from these programs. Two Michigan high schools (Houghton High School in the Upper Peninsula, and Hudsonville High School in the Lower Peninsula) independently initiated regional agreements in their conferences during the 2020-21 track and field season, to include wheelchair athletes. These seasons were highly successful and ran without incident. Houghton High School used the model delineated here and went on to sponsor a proposal to the MHSAA to adopt it state-wide.

### **Is it unfair to schools who don't have para-athletes if other schools get points for entering their para-athletes?**

Is it unfair when a school doesn't field an eligible girl or boy in pole vault or diving? No, it's not unfair, it just means that the coach wasn't able to recruit someone for that event. Most schools have para-athletes that are not competing or are competing in the non-adaptive categories, and they are currently NOT ALLOWED to compete for points except as a non-adaptive player. The goal of school sports is to attract ALL young people to sports so that they learn lifelong values of physical fitness, mental toughness, fairness, and the many other mental and physical attributes that everyone learns in sports.

If a school has a 7ft ninth grader, then the basketball coach is sure to recruit that person to the basketball team, and likewise, if a school has a student with a spinal cord injury, then they should be recruiting that student to race in a wheelchair or throw from a seat. Just like now, some schools will dominate certain categories because of population, location, and local traditions. Schools in Michigan's Upper Peninsula dominate hockey, but not for lack of eligible players in lower Michigan. There are just more people encouraged to play hockey in the UP, and local interest led to more equipment, rinks, development, and playing opportunities in the UP, and nobody calls that unfair to lower Michigan schools.