



Checklist

Incorporating Adaptive Athletes Onto A School Track and Field Team

The purpose of this guide is to provide coaches and athletic directors with an easy-to-use overview on how to successfully include students with physical disabilities within middle and high school track and field athletic programs.

The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) of the U.S. Department of Education issued a Dear Colleague Letter on January 25, 2013 clarifying elementary, secondary, and postsecondary level schools' responsibilities under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehab Act) to provide extracurricular athletic opportunities for students with disabilities. The guidance clarifies when and how schools should include students with disabilities in mainstream interscholastic athletic programs, defines what true equal treatment of student athletes with disabilities means, and urges schools to create adapted interscholastic athletic programs for students with disabilities.

Coaches and athletic directors can work with their conferences to create guidelines and rules for regular-season competition. There are already established guidelines in the state of Michigan that have been used by several conferences for multiple seasons throughout the state, and these can be easily adopted as-is (included in this handbook). The Michigan High School Athletic Association's newly adopted Adaptive Category Rules pertain to postseason Regional and Final competitions only. A comprehensive team approach including athletic directors, meet directors, track officials, coaches, and para-athletes with their families can ensure a successful season for everyone involved. Be proactive, be educated, communicate clearly, and have a fantastic season!

Basic Info

Name of School:

Conference:

Season:

Checklist

Actions Needed

Athletic Director

At the start of the school year:

- ☐ Identify any potential para-athletes in the district and make them aware of the opportunity to join the track and field team.
- ☐ If a potential para-athlete expresses interest, notify track coaches and make them aware of the possibility.
- ☐ Participate in the student's IEP or 504 process as appropriate, to include extracurricular activity provisions to the student's plan.
- ☐ Put para-athlete and family in touch with I Am An Athlete Too (iamanathletetoo@gmail.com) to provide support and training and help locate equipment.

Prior to the start of track season:

- ☐ Approach your school's conference and notify other districts that there will be a para-athlete on your team. Adopt rules for regular season meets, with unanimous consent (example included in this handbook).
- ☐ Send procedures for inclusion and best practice guidelines to track officials (included in this handbook).
- ☐ Provide an inservice to coaching staff and support personnel on how to incorporate the adaptive athlete safely, maintain the equipment, etc. (resources found at iamanathletetoo.wixsite.com/track)

During track season:

- ☐ Coordinate with meet officials of the hosting school to let them know a para-athlete is participating, so that they can implement appropriate changes with the timing company or hand timers.
- ☐ Before each meet, enter the para-athlete into Athletic.net in the adaptive division
- ☐ If the team is competing in an out of conference meet, notify the host school that a para-athlete is coming, and ensure that the athlete gets registered appropriately in Athletic.net. Establish procedures for inclusion, and agree upon rules/scoring ahead of time.
- ☐ When registering athletes for Regionals and Finals through the MHSAA, ensure that the para-athlete is included in a timely fashion with all other athletes.

Meet Director

NOTE: Prepare for each meet as if a para-athlete is going to participate

- ☐ Register each para-athlete in Athletic.net in the wheelchair/adaptive division. Under "Settings", select "Add Race Division", and then select "Wheelchair". Select "Add Events Myself" and add which events the para-athlete will be competing in.
- ☐ Ensure that required equipment (e.g. a field chair) is set up and available ahead of the meet.
- ☐ Set up which heats the para-athlete will be competing in (either a separate heat if there is more than one para-athlete, or simultaneous with standing runners if there is only one para-athlete).
- ☐ Determine ahead of time which lane the para-athlete will be competing in for each event, so that they can set their racing chair compensator appropriately.
- ☐ During the scratch meeting, remind coaches that there is a para-athlete competing, and review heats and lanes.
- ☐ Ensure track officials and timers are aware of, and feel confident with, the procedures established by the conference ahead of time.
- ☐ Know the cut-off times for scoring if there is only one para-athlete (agreed upon by the conference ahead of time - see example in this handbook).
- ☐ Enter scores for para-athletes manually into Athletic.net at the end of each race, based on agreed-upon conference rules.

Coaches

Prior to the start of track season:

- ☐ Identify any potential para-athletes in the district and make them aware of the opportunity to participate on the track and field team.
- ☐ If a student expresses interest, put para-athlete and family in touch with I Am An Athlete Too (iamanathletetoo@gmail.com) to provide support, training and help locate equipment.
- ☐ Participate in any training seminars offered by the district. There are two training seminars offered annually by I Am An Athlete Too (one in the upper peninsula, one in the lower peninsula).
- ☐ Become familiar with the rules/procedures adopted by your conference for the inclusion of para-athletes.
- ☐ Identify support personnel if needed to assist the para-athlete during practices and meets.
- ☐ Reach out to I Am An Athlete Too (iamanathletetoo@gmail.com) for resources on coaching strategies, becoming familiar with equipment use and maintenance, etc.
- ☐ Identify the transportation accommodations listed in the students' IEP or 504 plan.

During track practices:

- ☐ Work with support personnel and the para-athlete to develop a training program for practices. They may be training independently of other team members.
- ☐ Consider a roller for indoor training if the weather is poor.

During Meets

- ☐ Ensure ahead of time that host schools are aware that your team is coming with an adaptive athlete,, and review agreed-upon rules and scoring.
- ☐ Register the para-athlete as an adaptive athlete in Athletic.Net
- ☐ Transport para-athletes to meets as outlined in their IEP or 504 plan, unless other methods are agreed upon by the school and parents.
- ☐ During the scratch meeting, remind other schools that you have an adaptive athlete participating, and briefly remind everyone of the agreed-upon procedures and rules.
- ☐ If only limited slots are available for an event, remember that the adaptive category is separate and a wheelchair athlete does not take the place of a standing runner.

- ☐ Provide lane assignments to wheelchair athletes ahead of time, and allow time between events for a wheelchair athlete to set their compensator.
- ☐ If the team is competing in an out-of-conference meet, ensure that the host school is aware that a para-athlete is competing on your team, and agree upon procedures and rules/scoring ahead of time. Ensure that the host school understands how to register an adaptive athlete in Athletic.net.
- ☐ Provide a copy of the cut-off times/scoring criteria to the clerks, timers, and score keepers during a meet.
- ☐ Stand by the finish line, or have a support person by the finish line, to remind timers that there may still be an athlete on the track before the next heat begins.

During Post-Season Competition (Regionals and Finals)

- ☐ Register your para-athlete for Regionals and Finals through the MHSAA
- ☐ Qualification for Regionals and Finals entails participating in at least two regular season meets.

Track Officials

- ☐ Contact the Meet Director to receive and understand the conference rules for including an adaptive athlete
- ☐ Follow Officiating guidelines as established by Adaptive Track and Field USA, found [here](#).

IEP/504 Team

IDEA states that schools must take steps to give kids with IEPs an "equal opportunity to participate" in extracurricular activities, including sports. This means schools must give students with IEPs the help they need to take part. That includes both supports and services. The activities, along with the services and supports, however, must be in the child's IEP or 504 plan.

If a student is considering joining their school sports team, include the following into their educational plan:

- ☐ Accommodations required for transportation to/from school and school-sponsored extracurricular events
- ☐ Support personnel or modifications/accommodations required for participation in school-sponsored extracurricular events. This includes venue accessibility.
- ☐ Include athletic directors and coaches as members of the students' IEP/504 team

Para-Athlete/Family

- ☐ Notify your school athletic director of your intention to join the school track and field team well before the start of the season.
 - ☐ Contact I Am An Athlete Too to help you locate equipment, and to receive support/guidance
 - ☐ Find resources at iamanathletetoo.wixsite.com/track
 - ☐ Identify what supports you might need (e.g. transportation, assistance into/out of the racing chair, assistance moving the racing chair around the field during meets, etc.)
 - ☐ Have track and field written into your IEP/504 Plan, with appropriate transportation and accommodations
 - ☐ Register for track and field as per school requirements.
 - ☐ Get a sports physical from your doctor and submit it to the school prior to the start of the season.
 - ☐ Regularly maintain your equipment by ensuring tires are properly inflated, compensator adjusted, etc.
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- ☐ Become familiar with your conference's rules/procedures for regular season meets.
 - ☐ Participate in scheduled practices per your school/team rules
 - ☐ Participate in at least two regular season meets to qualify for MHSAA Regionals and Finals