



## Becoming Para Ready: Meet Management

### A Meet Director's Guide for Hosting World Para Athletics (WPA) Approved Events

[Athletics Canada's Becoming Para Ready](#) strategy emphasizes building a strong foundation for Para Athletics at the Provincial and Territorial level with the goal of creating greater capacity, supporting Para athletes, and promoting integration and inclusion at all levels.

The following document was created to help support Meet Directors in hosting World Para Athletics (WPA) approved events in an inclusive and integrated way, ensuring a positive experience for all.

#### **What is a WPA Approved meet?**

A World Para Athletics (WPA) approved meet is a competition which is conducted in full compliance with the applicable and relevant [World Para Athletics Rules and Regulations](#), and which has applied through or endorsed by its Member Federation (e.g., Athletics Canada), to World Para Athletics. These approved competitions ensure that the WPA Rules and Regulations are followed.

#### **1) WPA Rankings**

A competition is required to be WPA approved for an athlete's performance results to be recognized and listed within the WPA world ranking lists. Para athletes qualify for major championships such as WPA World Championship, Para Pan American Games, and Paralympic Games through the World Para Athletics Rankings. Having access to WPA approved meets that are meaningful (i.e., competing with other Para Athletes, offering a range of events, etc.) becomes vital to their progress along the Para Athletics pathway.

#### **2) WPA Approval Cost**

Athletics Canada purchases licenses from World Para Athletics every year and they are made available to Branches and Clubs to apply for at no cost.

#### **3) Process of Applying**

In December of each year, Athletics Canada requests its member Branches and Clubs identify which competitions are applying for WPA approval.

#### **4) Hosting a Para Ready Meet**

Meet Directors can ensure their meet is "Para Ready" by ensuring the following elements are taken into consideration:

##### **a) Para Events**

Para Athletics includes both track and field events for athletes with physical impairments (both seated and standing), vision impairments, and intellectual impairments. A Para counterpart exists for almost every able-bodied event.

Specific events will vary based on an athlete's sport class at major championships, but athletes can still compete in other events/distances domestically.

If you are unsure which Para event to host, please reach out to Athletics Canada's Para Development Manager at [para@athletics.ca](mailto:para@athletics.ca)

## **b) Rules**

The rules of Para Athletics are almost identical to those of its Olympic counterparts. Allowances are made to accommodate certain impairments (for example, blind and visually impaired runners may compete supported by guide runners attached to them by a tether at the wrist).

[Link to summary of rules](#) (English only)

## **c) Seeding**

For the most part, ambulatory athletes should be integrated within sections of able-bodied athletes and seeded alongside athletes of similar performances i.e., time, distances, heights).

Wheelchair racers and seated throws athletes require their own sections.

If there are a limited number of athletes registered in each sport class, you may combine multiple sport classes in the same event (i.e., T34 & T53) can compete in the same section. This helps scheduling but also gives athletes a more meaningful competition.

## **d) Scheduling Para Events**

The following considerations should be taken when scheduling wheelchair racing and seated throws.

### **Seated Throws:**

- An average of 12-15 minutes per athlete is required, which includes the time to tie-down each throws frame, warm-up and complete their round of throws.
- Note: that all Seated Throwing Events (Shot Put, Discus Throw, Javelin Throw and Club Throw) should be conducted from a circle with diameter of  $2.135\text{m} \pm 0.005\text{m}$  or  $2.50\text{m} \pm 0.005\text{m}$ , using a 34.92-degree sector. The rim of the circle shall be at least 6mm thick and shall be white. The use of movable platforms meeting these specifications is permissible. ([Rule 34 World Para Athletics Rules and Regulations](#))

### **Wheelchair racing:**

- For events 200m and greater, time for wheelchair racers to complete at least one full lap prior to the start of their event should be accounted for in your meet schedule. This is required for wheelchair racers to adjust their steering mechanism (the compensator) to the radius of the track for their assigned lane.

- It is recommended that wheelchair racing sections are held at the start of each event. This will enable athletes to set their compensators while officials transition to the start line of the next event.
- It's a good practice to schedule Wheelchair racing events at the beginning of sessions to allow athletes to warm up on the track (same surface as competition).

#### e) **Volunteers**

In addition to the regular fleet of volunteers' positions required for track and field meets, Volunteers (approximately 4) are needed to help support the tie-down process for seated throws. Supported training is recommended and can be arranged. Please reach out to your local Disability Sport Organization or Athletics Canada at [para@athletics.ca](mailto:para@athletics.ca) for more information if you do not have experienced volunteers in this area.

#### f) **Accessibility**

A "Para Ready" meet takes into consideration accessibility from both a physical and virtual/digital perspective.

##### i) **Physical Accessibility**

###### a. **Accessible Facility**

Wheelchair users must be able to access the following areas in the venue without obstruction:

- Parking Lot(s)
- Call Room (is the circulation pathway from the call room to all field of play areas accessible via a smooth path (i.e., no grass or stairs).
- Field of play (can a wheelchair athlete access the field of play without steps or rails)
- Throws circles
  - Seated Throws requires rails or a portable platform for chair tie-downs (see "Equipment" below)
- Washrooms
- Awards area including podium
- Stands/Spectator area
- Coaches' area
- Warm Up Area
  - Athletes that use a wheelchair require a safe area for warm up. The most optimal being the track itself but it could also be a parking lot blocked off, pedestrian walkway, or a dedicated area for warm up on rollers. Be sure to include this information in your Meet Technical Package.

## Quick guide to Facility Para Readiness

Among other things, an accessible facility means full access to the track and throws circle for athletes who use a Wheelchair. Review your accessibility by running through some of these questions:

- Are there curbs around your facility that athletes would need to step over to access the field of play? If so, how can this be remedied for wheelchair athletes?
- Are your change rooms and bathrooms accessible? Does it have an accessible washroom stall? If not, accessible porta-potties can be rented.

### b. Accessible Accommodation

If you are providing a meet hotel, please ensure the hotel offers accessible accommodations.

Note that not all wheelchair users need a fully accessible hotel room (wider doors, lower counters, rails in bathrooms). Inquire with the hotel about the width of their standard hotel rooms.

Most standard wheelchair sizes range from 25in-36in wide, and power wheelchairs start at 23in from tire to tire. It is recommended that you have a minimum of 32" for door openings. However, for most people, a door with a 30-inch opening is more than enough for standard wheelchair access.

## ii) Inclusive Communication

### a) Athlete Eligibility

Inclusion of Para Athletes in your meet should be made explicit in your promotion and registration process. It should state clearly that the meet is open to Para Athletes and be specific as to which events.

*Example:*

*2022 Harry Jerome Track Classic*

*Participants: Open to all athletes, including Para Athletes.*

*Events:*

- *Men's: 100m, 200m, High Jump, Shot Put*
- *Men's (Para): WC 100, WC 200m, Seated Shot Put, Para ambulatory athletes will be integrated into able-bodied events.*
- *Women's: 100m, 400m, Long Jump, Discus*  
*Women's (Para): WC 100m, WC 400m, Seated Discus, Para ambulatory athletes will be integrated into able-bodied events.*

## **b) Marketing & Promotion**

DID YOU KNOW? PDFs are often hard not compatible with voice readers? Ensure your digital communications are accessible to vision impaired athletes by adding Alt-Text to your images and making a word version of your documents available. Tables can also be challenging for voice readers, so it's best to present your schedule in list format.

## **c) Registration Process**

When setting up your registration page in Trackie, under Step 2, select "Category Specific Event" and then select the "Paralympic" drop down and tick "Select all". This will allow athletes to indicate their [Para Sport Classification](#) and sport classes during the registration process. This will ensure Para athletes feel included (visual representation). It also notifies officials and other meet staff of the Para athletes to ensure WPA Rules are followed and aids in the results management process.

Note: An athlete's Para Sport Classification may differ if they compete in both track and field events.

## **d) In Stadium Announcements & Broadcasting**

Make sure your announcer(s) is provided with information on the Para athletes including classification and additional profile info if colour commentary is provided for your event.

## **e) Results**

Please submit your results to your Provincial or Territorial branch or directly with Athletics Canada to [results@athletics.ca](mailto:results@athletics.ca) within 2 business days of the final event.

## **f) Awards**

Ensure your podium and/or awards area is wheelchair accessible.

Consider how awards will be allocated to Para Athletes. Recommendations and/or guidelines can be provided through Athletics Canada. Please contact [para@athletics.ca](mailto:para@athletics.ca) for more support on this.

## **g) Officials**

For the most part, the competition rules are the same and Para Athletes should be treated with the same respect and attitude as all athletes.

Specific rules are in place for certain sport classes as outlined in the [World Para Athletics Rules](#). Please ensure your officials are up to date on these rules and/or have experience officiating events with Para Athletes.

A webinar series on [Becoming Para Ready for officials](#) is available to provide some basic information on Para considerations.

After registration is complete, it is recommended to review the sport classes/impairments of the athletes registered and review the specific rules that apply.

An additional best practice includes engaging an experienced official to support in-person training of officials before your event.

#### **h) Equipment**

Meet directors are responsible for ensuring they have the following equipment for Para Athletes as stated in the [WPA Rules and Regulations](#)

- Tie-down capacity for seated throws – i.e., drilled holes in the circle to affix a rail to accommodate a seated throws chair, ratchets to strap the chair down (min. 5) – see more details specifications in event section
  - Note: If your facility is not currently equipped with these, it is worth raising the issue with your facility manager. Most municipalities have funding or grants available to help improve the accessibility of their facilities.
- When securing the rails on the throwing circle, ensure that the bolt used to secure the rails on the circle are anchored deep enough into a solid foundation (i.e., concrete) to ensure it does not lift when in use. Asphalt is too soft and will cause the rails to lift.
- A seated throws platform may be used if there are no rails in your throws circle. Please visit the [Para Throws Manual](#) for more information
- Additional volunteers may be required to supported seated throws events. See the section on volunteers below.
- All implement weights applicable to Para throws (including lighter weights such as 0.75lbs disc, 2.0kg shot). Please refer the appendix in the WPA Rules and Regulations
- All implements required for Para throws (discus, shot, javelin and [club throw](#)). If you don't have clubs, please reach out to [para@athletics.ca](mailto:para@athletics.ca) for info on where to purchase them or to be connected with a club to borrow them from.
- Guide and Assistant vests for Visually Impaired athletes and guides.

**For more information and assistance on making your meet Para Ready, contact Athletics Canada's Para Development Manager at [para@athletics.ca](mailto:para@athletics.ca)**