

GOALBALL GUIDELINES

ABOUT ATHLETICS FOR ALL

History

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.

The OCR Dear Colleague Letter helps clarify the existing regulations and statute under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehab Act) to provide interscholastic, club, and intramural athletics for students with disabilities. The Rehab Act protects the rights of students with disabilities from discrimination in educational programs and activities in colleges and universities. The Rehab Act requires that students with disabilities be provided equal opportunity for participation in interscholastic, club, and intramural athletic programs offered by a school.

What the Athletics for All Task Force Offers

Introductory sport guidelines and best practices for adapted sports considered easy to adapt to mainstream interscholastic sports

Facilitation of training for your coaches and officials with adaptive sports experts

Access to hundreds of community based adaptive sports organizations, resources and tools for specific sports

Decades of experience in disability sport training, sport adaptations and adaptive equipment

Sports Are Important for Students with Disabilities

Benefits for students with disabilities who participate in sports are similar to students without disabilities:

- More likely to have better grades, school attendance and lower dropout rate
- Build discipline, self-esteem, confidence, and independence
- Learn team work, skill development and goal setting
- Promote healthy lifestyle
- Can be a predictor of later successes in college, career and community

- Students with disabilities do not receive the same amount of physical activity and athletic opportunities as students without disabilities
- According to the CDC, youth with disabilities are twice as likely to be physically inactive, resulting in obesity rates almost 40% higher than in youth without disabilities creating much higher risks for health-related diseases

Due to the resources available, it is possible to add adapted sports within school athletic programs without creating an undue administrative burden for State High School Associations or requiring the association to change existing rules for the athletes without disabilities.

OVERVIEW

- **Object:** to throw the ball down the court and into the opposing team's goal (or across their goal line if no netted goals are present)
- **Number of Players:** Six players total, three on each team
- **The Court:** Volleyball-sized court that is modified with tactile markings (tape with string underneath).

Goalball is an adapted sport that can accommodate more than just athletes who are blind or visually impaired. Because of the requirement that all participants wear eye shades, goalball is a sport that can include many athletes while maintaining a level playing field. Sighted and visually impaired athletes can both experience the game on an equal footing. Other disabilities can participate as well with appropriate accommodations.

At the international level, all athletes who compete in goalball must be classified as legally blind. However, these requirements do not exist at the domestic level. Sighted players are welcomed at many local and regional tournaments, and The United States Association of Blind Athletes (USABA) allows athletes who do not qualify as legally blind to compete in their sanctioned competitions. As blindness is a low instance disability, it is highly recommended that schools and recreational programs include sighted and other athletes to promote competition and inclusion.

In a recreational setting, further modifications to the sport can be implemented to allow even those with physical disabilities to participate. For example: If an amputee athlete wants to participate, all players can be instructed to throw from their knees.

TRAINING & EQUIPMENT

Training for Coaches

Coaching is only permitted at certain points in a goalball game. While the game is in progress, fans and coaches must remain silent. Coaches must stop communicating once the referee says, "quiet please." Any time a referee whistles to stop the game, coaches are permitted to communicate with their players. Coaches are also allowed four substitutions and four timeouts during a game. Each team is permitted to

have up to six players total. For more in depth coaching information, game video and drill ideas, visit the resource section on page 14.

Training Adapted Athletes

Teaching an athlete with a visual impairment to perform an athletic maneuver can require more specialized instructions. Provide detailed instructions and feedback on foot positioning, arm and hip movement, and follow through. If an athlete has extremely limited vision, help by giving them small physical cues and modifications. Always ask before repositioning their body in a gentle and appropriate manner. More skill and technical training can be found USABA's Mobile Coach resource (visit page 14 for specific link).

Basic Skills to Teach Athletes

- Throwing
- Blocking
- Passing
- Orientation to the court

Be sure to orient new players to the entire court, including the team area. Athletes with low vision will have difficulty conceptualizing the space they are expected to play in if they don't first explore the entire area. You can position players on an orientation marking and have them practice finding other positions on the floor to give them confidence in moving in their surroundings.

Good goalball teams will work together to coordinate their defense and offense. If players miscommunicate about positioning or responsibilities on the court, there will be gaps in the defense's protection of the goal. Constant verbal and auditory communication is crucial. Communication is only restricted while the ball is moving down the court so that one team cannot prevent the other from hearing the ball.

While teaching new teams or players, coaches should emphasize talking to teammates to facilitate passing and defensive coordination. Coaches should emphasize playing good defense and limiting penalties like high balls.

EQUIPMENT

The following equipment is crucial for playing goalball:

- One goalball
- Knee and elbow pads for each participant
- Six sets of eyeshades (blacked out ski goggles or anything else that will adequately block out light)

- Athletic supporters and chest protectors
- String or cord for the boundary and orientation lines (1/16 cord or string)
- Tape that will not damage the floor (painters tape is an inexpensive and easy solution while floor/court tape can provide more durability)

The following are not crucial but may be desired for a better game experience:

- Hip pads (hockey pads, football girdles and compression pads are all readily available options)
- Goals (custom goalball goals can be created out of PVC relatively inexpensively, while metal goals can be purchased)

THE COURT

The boundaries and materials comprising a goalball court. A goalball court is the size of an international volleyball court and has specific orientation markings. All court markings are tactilely marked with string or cord running underneath tape.

COMPETITION & RULES

RULES

- The ball must touch the ground at least once on or before a team's "highball line" which is 6 meters from their goal line (one on either end). The ball will roll, skip or bounce down the court. A throw that does not touch before the high ball line (6 meters) is a penalty and results in the offending player defending the entire court for one throw
- The thrower will throw the ball underhand much like a bowling throw, ensuring that the ball makes contact with the ground on their team's side of the high ball line. The thrower will want to throw from a lunge position with the non-throwing side leg out in front helping to provide a powerful base to drive through the ball
- Elite players will often incorporate spin that resembles a discus or shot put throw
- Defending players use the sound of the approaching ball to position themselves and block the ball.
- All three athletes on a team act as defenders.
- There are two wings and a center that communicate and position themselves both before and after the ball is thrown
- Proper defensive goalball form involves laying fully extended on one's side parallel to the goal, presenting maximum surface area to keep the ball from rolling or bouncing into the net
- Defenders should attempt to keep the top hip at a slight forward angle with their top foot and top hand positioned slightly forward

- When a team blocks the ball, they have ten seconds to return the ball down the court towards the other team
- Regulation games are comprised of two twelve minute halves, although games can be shortened where necessary
- An infraction occurs when there is a violation that results in the offending team losing possession of the ball. These can include pass out and out of bounds.

STRATEGIES

The defensive team usually sets up a zone defensive. The player in the middle of the court is called the center. The center is the primary defensive player. He or she plays at the front of the player's zone and defends a majority of the court. The players to the right and left of the center are called wings. The wings are usually the primary offensive or throwing players. Defensively they play behind and to the left and right of the center defending their respective areas. During the game, the center will usually stop the ball and pass it to a wing. While the wing is throwing the ball, the center will reorient themselves to the center of the court. Knowing that a thrower is low to return to his defensive position, or that a player might now be in his defensive position, many teams will attempt a "quick throw" hoping to catch their opponent out of position. Curve balls, off speed balls, and various other balls are sometimes thrown hoping to confuse the other team. Player may quietly change wing positions with the ball hoping to surprise the defending team by throwing from a different area.

COMPETITION MODELS

Competitions are typically divided by gender and age group, although youth teams are permitted to compete in open competitions as well. However, for a recreational program, mixing gender and ability levels is manageable and can help to expand competitions. Including other disability groups and able-bodied athletes can be approached in the same manner. Teams should be constructed to be somewhat equal.

The rules for goalball games can be modified where necessary to allow greater inclusion for inexperienced players or athletes with various needs. One coach or referee can keep a basic game of goalball flowing by calling goals and outs. As players advance, penalties like high balls, eye shades, and ten second violations should be incorporated. An officially sanctioned game of goalball will include two referees, four goal judges and four table officials, but this is not required for a game to be played at even an advanced intermediate level. As players learn to play the game, coaches will learn the rules of play and how to direct the flow of the game. USABA offers referee certification and the full rulebook is available at IBSA's website.

KEEP IN MIND

Goalball competitions occur at a national, regional and local level. USABA hosts both a High School National Championship and an Open National Championship each year. Regional tournaments also take place all over the United States. Most states have a School for the Blind that will have a goalball team.

These schools often participate in Blind School-specific athletic conferences. New programs can seek to integrate into these existing tournaments.

GROUPINGS

The groupings presented here are suggested ways to create competition classes for athletes with disabilities. In order to not be confused with the national and international classification systems, we use the term groupings for school-based sport.

ROLE OF ATHLETE WITHOUT DISABILITIES

Programs may wish to consider a policy whereby athletes without disabilities may enter the adapted program temporarily while rehabilitating from an injury, so long as the injury present in such a way that the athlete might otherwise otherwise qualify someone with a permanent disability experiences the same physical limitations. For example, any injury or surgery where the physician has recommended the athlete stay off the limb for a period of time and where that time spans a full season of an adapted sport, the athlete might qualify to participate in adapted sports regularly.

How will a state determine who is eligible? There are several different models to determine eligibility and minimal disability criteria. When possible and appropriate, it is best to stay within the three categories: sit down, stand up, and visually impaired.

Athletes with a disability have impairment (s) that may lead to competitive disadvantage in sport. Classification is the process by which athletes are assessed relative to the impact of impairment on their ability to compete in a specific sport.

Within the classification system, criteria are put in place to ensure that winning is determined by skill, fitness, power, endurance, tactical ability and mental focus, the same factors that account for success in sport for athletes without a disability.

Classification is sport specific. Each sport has established groups, call sport classes, to group athletes for competition based on activity limitation for that sport.

The international classification system for individual sports can be viewed online at: Paralympic.org/classification. Most IPC classification systems are not appropriate (too detailed) for a high school setting. It is suggested to modify to simplified / grouped classes such as sitting (wheelchair athletes), visually impaired, and ambulatory

Disabilities

At the interscholastic level, these disabilities can be served in goalball:

- Achondroplasia
- Amputee
- Arthrogryposis

- Avascular Necrosis
- Birth Defect
- Brachial Plexus Palsy
- Cerebellar Disgenesis
- Cerebral Palsy
- Congenital Hypotonia
- Congenital Limb Loss
- Diplegia
- Dystonia
- Erb's Palsy
- Femoral Focal Deficiency
- Femoral Hypoplasia
- FMD
- Full Joint Ankylosis or Replacement
- Hearing Impaired
- Larsen's Syndrome
- Leigh's Disease
- Lower Limb Paralysis
- McCune Albright Syndrome
- Mitochondrial Disease
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Muscular Dystrophy
- Osteogenesis Imperfecta
- PFFD (Proximal)
- Progressive Neurological Disorder

- Severe Amblyopia
- Severe Scoliosis
- Spastic Diplegia
- Spastic Paralysis
- Spina Bifida
- Spinal Cord Injury
- Spinal Muscular Atrophy
- Stroke
- Transverse Myelitis
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Vertigo/Balance Issues
- Visual Motor Integration Impairment
- Visually Impaired
- Type 1 Diabetes
- Any other medical doctor diagnosed permanent lower body disability that prevents a player from competing in mainstream sports

SAFETY

Student athletes with disabilities do not represent a higher level of liability risk or risk management concern than student athletes without disabilities. With proper planning and contingencies, student athletes with disabilities can seamlessly integrate into the dynamics of an interscholastic team. Individualized assessments can help assess or identify any potential safety concerns.

Ensuring athlete safety is a priority. Through education, resources, and training, members of the sport community can recognize, reduce, and respond to misconduct in sport. Please refer to the following resources for more information.

What is SafeSport?: <http://safesport.org/what-is-safesport/>

Coaches Toolkit: <http://safesport.org/toolkit/coaches/>

SafeSport Trainings: <http://safesport.org/take-the-training/>

GLOSSARY

- **Court:** The boundaries and materials comprising a goalball court. A goalball court is the size of an international volleyball court and has specific orientation markings. All court markings are tactilely marked with string or cord running underneath tape.
- **Eyeshades:** Goggles or shades that have been completely blacked out so that the wearer has no ability to perceive light.
- **Goal:** The goals span the entire (9m) width of a goalball court with a crossbar height of 1.25m.
- **Goalball:** A ball (as specified by IBSA) that weighs 1.25kg, has circumference of 75cm, and contains three bells.
- **Infraction:** A violation that results in the offending team losing possession of the ball. These can include pass out and out of bounds.
- **Penalty:** A violation of the rules that results in one team having a shot on the opposing team's goal while only one player is allowed to defend the court. These can include high ball, long ball, eye shade violation, illegal coaching, unsportsmanlike conduct, etc. See the rulebook for a full list of penalty.

RESOURCES

United States Association of Blind Athletes (USABA): www.usaba.org

USABA is the Management Organization for the sport of Goalball in the United States. USABA sanctions all national tournaments and manages the elite level national program.

International Blind Sports Federation (IBSA): www.ibsasport.org

IBSA is the International Management Organization for the sport of goalball. IBSA sanctions all elite competitions including World Championships and the Paralympic Games. IBSA can help provide:

- Links to further resources
- The official rulebook
- Schedule of upcoming international events

Mobile Coaching Resource: http://usaba.org/index.php/membership/news-details/usaba_launches_new_mobile_coach_goalball_resource_site/

Equipment Resource: Targe: <http://www.targeinnovations.com/goalball/>

Equipment Resource: NSW: <http://www.goalball.com.au/shop/equipment/>

MISSION

The mission of the Athletics for All Task Force is to inform and provide the tools and guidelines by which coaches, athletic directors and school administrators can include students with physical disabilities in interscholastic sports.

VISION

It is the vision of the Athletics for All Task Force that students with disabilities will have access to athletic opportunities throughout the United States in an equal manner as students without disabilities. The Task Force envisions an educational system that provides equal opportunities for student-athletes to derive the physical, mental, and emotional benefits of interscholastic sports, enabling each to develop into healthy, well-adjusted, contributing members of their respective communities.

ATHLETICS FOR ALL TASK FORCE

Active Policy Solutions

<http://www.activepolicysolutions.com/>

American Association of Adapted Sports Programs (AASP)

<http://www.adaptedsports.org/>

Bay Area Outreach and Recreation Program (BORP)

<http://www.borp.org/>

BlazeSports America

<http://www.blazesports.org/>

Bridge II Sports

<http://www.bridge2sports.org/>

Competitive Edge Management

Disabled Sports USA (DSUSA)

<http://www.disabledsportsusa.org>

Great Lakes Adapted Sports Association (GLASA)

<http://glasa.org/>

Lakeshore Foundation

<http://www.lakeshore.org/>

Louisiana Games Uniting Mind and Body (GUMBO)

<https://sites.google.com/site/louisianagumboinc/home>

National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability (NCHPAD)

<http://www.nchpad.org/>

Special Olympics

<http://www.specialolympics.org/>

United States Association of Blind Athletes (USABA)

<http://www.usaba.org/>

Wheelchair & Ambulatory Sports USA (WASUSA)

<http://wasusa.org/>