

# **IPSF Policy on Pole Sports for Persons with Different Abilities**



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### **Foreword**

Pole Sports has been evolving at a rapid rate over the last 5 years strengthening our communities position in the sporting field, and contributing to our overall quality of life of a growing demographic of enthusiastic people. The IPSF is committed to developing Pole Sport both nationally and internationally. We want to encourage the world to become involved in Pole Sport, including those with different abilities.

The *IPSF Policy on Pole Sports for Persons with different abilities* provides a framework for engaging partners and stakeholders in initiating changes that aim to reduce and ultimately eliminate Pole Sport-specific barriers that prevent those with different abilities from participating in Pole Sports. At the same time, the Policy addresses some of the environmental, structural, systemic, social and personal barriers that keep many people from being full participants in Pole Sports.

We look forward to working with our national federations to gradually evolve an inclusive sport for all over the next 5 years.



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## 1.0 Introduction

"Pole Sports for persons with a different ability" refers to all Pole Sport activities and disciplines, at all levels and in all forms of participation for persons with a disability. It includes athletes, participants and enthusiasts with a disability who pursue competitive or recreational Pole Sports. It involves other participants, with or without disabilities, who act as coaches, officials, administrators and volunteers, or in other capacities.

The *Policy on Sport for Persons with Different Abilities* (Policy) is intended to facilitate the full and active participation of persons with a disability in sport. It will be implemented over the next 5 years and developed in consultation with national federations and experts in this field. Programs and initiatives will focus on four areas:

- Raising awareness
- Increasing participation
- Developing best coaching and training practices
- Developing an inclusive code of points system

A Long Term Athlete Development programme will also be implemented as this area of pole sports evolves. The *Policy on Sport for Persons with Different Abilities* provides a framework for engaging athletes, enthusiasts, coaches and officials to initiate institutional and behavioural changes leading towards the progressive reduction and, ultimately, elimination of Pole Sport-specific barriers that prevent persons with a disability from participating in sport.

## 2.0 Scope

The Policy will direct the work of the International Pole Sports Federation with organisations involved in Paralympic and Special Olympic and IPSF National Pole Sports Federations.

## 3.0 Context

### 3.1 Policy Environment

The focus of public debate on disability issues has increasingly moved away from medical definitions of "disability" to social models of understanding systemic barriers that prevent the full and active participation of persons with a disability in society. This, in turn, has resulted in greater awareness of disability issues within Pole Sports and the need for policy intervention.

The *Human Rights Act* and other legislative frameworks guarantee the exercise and enjoyment of civil, social, economic, political and cultural rights for all. They require government departments and agencies to develop inclusive policies, programs and practices.

The *Policy on Sport for Persons with a Different Abilities* will be implemented in a manner consistent with principles and priorities of other Sport policies, strategies or frameworks.



### **3.2 Contributions of Pole Sport**

Pole Sports and physical activity can be used as a tool for promoting the inclusion of excluded and vulnerable groups in mainstream community life. This atmosphere fosters increased social awareness and cross-cultural understanding, the creation of social harmony and celebration of diversity.

Pole Sports as a form of physical activity is a great contributor to good health. It reduces the risk of obesity and diseases like stroke, Type II diabetes and cancer, and hence reduces the health care costs to treat such diseases. Physical activity brings about physical, social, and personal benefits for persons with a disability, helping them to overcome social isolation and become more self-reliant.

### **3.3 Issues in Sport for Persons with Different Abilities**

Barriers to Pole Sport participation faced by persons with a disability are wide ranged and coping with them requires a high level of personal commitment and, more importantly, resources. For example, sport training for persons with a disability is often more expensive than it is for their able-bodied counterparts due to special transportation needs, specialised equipment and requirements for personal care support e.g., guides, interpreters.

Some environmental conditions are more conducive than others to the participation of persons with a disability in sport. Difficult or harsh climatic factors may represent even larger obstacles to sport participation for persons with a disability than for able-bodied participants. e.g. hot humid conditions effect the ability to grip the pole.

Creating an interest in Pole Sports participation among persons with a disability is often more difficult due to a lack of adapted awareness and ability to coach those with different abilities. Recruitment is problematic due to difficulties in identifying and reaching large numbers of potential participants. Persons with a congenital disability may never have had the opportunity to learn fundamental movement skills or be able to build strength and stay away from Pole sports for that reason.

Studies also point out that facilities, equipment and specialised coaches are not easily accessible to athletes with a disability. As a result of these and other systemic barriers, persons with a disability remain under-represented in the Pole Sport system.

### **3.4 Challenges**

The IPSF is developing a two-pronged approach to overcome the barriers of participation of persons with different abilities. First, is to encourage IPSF National Federations (NFs) to set specific performance targets for the integration of athletes with a disability in their competition programming. The second is to promote and defend the rights of persons with a disability to develop to their fullest potential and participate in sport at rates similar to non-disabled participants.



In spite of the many challenges faced by those with different abilities, athletes have achieved outstanding results at the highest levels of international sporting competition and the IPSF are working towards extending that success throughout the disciplines of Pole Sports. The *Policy* builds on the strength of these outstanding performances to promote positive outcomes that increase the participation of persons with a disability in sport. For the IPSF to maintain or improve on its current status in international competitions, systemic changes within the Pole Sport system will have to occur. Specific areas of focus include:

- early childhood sport and physical literacy;
- adequate access to training, coaches and facilities;
- increased opportunities for athletes in national competitions;
- application of sport medicine, research and performance evaluations;
- improved funding;
- enhanced interaction between NFs and disability-based sport organisations.

### **3.5 Guiding Principles**

The following principles will guide the implementation of the *Policy on Sport for Persons with Different Abilities*:

- Pole Sports is athlete/participant-centred;
- Pole Sports promotes leadership;
- Pole Sports is based on equity and access;
- Pole Sports is focussed on development;
- Pole Sports champions excellence;
- Pole Sports serves the public interest.

### **4.0 Vision**

The *Policy on Sport for Persons with Different Abilities* envisions the full and active participation of persons with a disability in Pole Sports at all levels and in all forms, to the extent of their abilities and interests. To accomplish this vision, the Pole Sports community will have to initiate institutional and behavioural changes that increase awareness of Pole Sports for persons with a disability and make it possible to deliver programs in a barrier-free sport system.

### **5.0 Objectives and Strategies**

The objectives of *The Policy on Sport for Persons with Different Abilities* and the action plan for their implementation are based on the four goals of the *IPSF*:

- Enhanced Participation
- Enhanced Excellence
- Enhanced Capacity
- Enhanced Interaction

In keeping with these four goals, the Policy supports the following objectives and their strategies:



## **5.1 Increasing Participation**

To increase the number of persons with a disability involved in Pole Sports activities at all levels and in all forms.

### **5.1.1 Raising Awareness**

Provide leadership and resources for engaging athletes, coaches and officials to promote awareness and understanding of Pole Sports for persons with a disability.

### **5.1.2 Access**

Provide leadership and resources to increase access by persons with a disability to the services and programs of the Pole Sports community, and improve access to Pole Sports activities based on Long-Term Athlete Development, including access to specially trained coaches.

## **5.2 Supporting Excellence**

The focus of this long term objective is to support the achievement of podium results at Paralympic Games and related World Championships once Pole Sports become recognised. In addition, it is an objective of this Policy to increase and sustain the number of athletes with a disability pursuing excellence at the national and international levels.

### **5.2.1 Talent Identification and Development**

Apply Long-Term Athlete Development principles to ensure the development of the future generation of world – class athletes with a disability. The IPSF will provide leadership to harmonise existing initiatives that support athlete development for disability sport. The IPSF will also work with its partners to support their efforts to attract a greater number of persons with a disability to pursue high performance sport, and to identify and properly prepare those with the talent and commitment to excel at the highest level.

### **5.2.2 Competitive Opportunities**

Engage the Pole Sports community in developing appropriate domestic competitive structures and opportunities at the various stages of development, based on each disability sport movement's Long-Term Athlete Development model.

### **5.2.3 Coaching**

Provide leadership and resources to increase access by athletes with a disability to appropriately certified and qualified coaches. The IPSF will work with other partners to enhance the support systems and incentives for coaches of athletes with a disability.

### **5.2.4 Sport Science and Medicine**

Work with partners to continue to identify and respond to specific sport science and medicine needs.



### **5.3 Building Capacity**

To strengthen the capacity of the Pole Sports system to address the needs of sport for persons with a disability.

#### **5.3.1 Eligibility, Classification and Divisioning**

Support the Pole Sports community in developing and applying fair and clear systems/procedures of eligibility, classification and divisioning.

#### **5.3.2 Human Resource Development**

Support the work of partner organisations responsible for developing Pole Sports leaders, coaches, officials and administrators who have the skills, resources, and ability to respond to the needs of sport for people with a disability.

#### **5.3.3 Research**

Acquire and generate research to inform policy development and practices related to Pole Sports for persons with a disability, as well as to share the knowledge and experience gained with athletes, coaches, officials and the public at large. Areas of research could include sport medicine, sport science and emerging social trends.

### **5.4 Fostering Interaction**

To enhance efforts within the Pole Sports community to improve communication, coordination and collaboration to support the sport participation of persons with a disability.

#### **5.4.1 Networking**

Support the creation and maintenance of networks of communication and collaboration among all in Pole Sports for persons with a disability.

#### **5.4.2 International Representation**

Support NFs in their efforts to advocate Pole Sports for persons with a disability on the international stage and position IPSF interests and values with respect to Pole Sports for persons with a disability in international organisations.

## **6.0 Policy Implementation and Evaluation**

The IPSF will develop and implement an Action Plan for its *Policy on Sport for Persons with Different Abilities* in consultation with NFs and partners that will outline specific areas of focus.

The achievement of the Policy's objectives can be characterised by the following desired outcomes:

- an increase in the number of persons with a disability participating in competitive and recreational Pole Sports;
- an increase in the number of coaches and volunteers supporting Pole Sports for persons with different abilities;



- an increase in the number of appropriate domestic competitive structures and opportunities for athletes with a disability;
- an increase in the number of Pole Sports participation development projects and bilateral agreements with national governments concerning persons with a disability.

In order to measure the progress in achieving these outcomes, baseline data will be established, and monitoring will be conducted regularly and objectively through ongoing performance measurement. Based on its Results-based Management and Accountability Framework, the IPSF will use its performance management strategy to guide its approach to identifying, collecting and reporting on activities, outcomes and indicators.

## 7.0 Conclusion

The IPSF are leading the way in the creation of innovative initiatives for the inclusion of persons with different abilities in Pole Sports. *The Policy on Pole Sports for people with different abilities* is an initiative that advances positive social outcomes that contribute to national government's policy of inclusion. The combination of leadership, partnerships and leading-edge initiatives from the Policy will promote a Pole Sports system that encourages and enables persons with a disability to participate fully in Pole Sports to the extent of their abilities and interests. The Action Plan for the Policy will identify specific initiatives that will be regularly updated and monitored to ensure their alignment with the overall objectives of the Policy.



## Glossary

The definitions below clarify certain terms and concepts that are employed in the policy document.

### **Access**

Access refers to the freedom and ability of a person with a disability to make use of the Pole Sports programming, facilities and services offered at all levels of the IPSF sport system.

### **Athlete with a disability**

Any sport competitor who meets the minimum disability eligibility requirements under the Paralympic Games and Special Olympics World Games.

### **Barriers**

Barriers, in this Policy, refers to environmental, structural, systemic, social and personal realities that prevent persons with a disability from participating in Pole Sports, or make such participation difficult to achieve (e.g., building design, transportation, attitudes, etc.). Barriers may be socio-economic (e.g., poverty, poor health) or may be characteristics of the sport system that prevent or limit the sport participation of persons with a disability (e.g., lack of awareness programs, lack of specialised coaching or adapted equipment, lack of competitions, etc.).

### **Barrier-free**

In the context of this Policy, a barrier-free Pole Sports system refers to an ideal end goal where the Pole Sports system has identified barriers to the sport participation of persons with a disability and has implemented the necessary strategies and resources to remove these obstacles to their participation. In a barrier-free sport system, persons with a disability have equitable opportunities to experience and enjoy involvement in sport to the extent of their abilities and interest.

### **Classification**

The application of diagnostic criteria in Paralympic sports intended to classify athletes with a disability in different categories of ability.

### **Divisioning**

A process of designing competitive structures for athletes with an intellectual disability so that they are able to compete with other athletes of similar ability.

### **Eligibility**

The process used by each of the disability sport movements to determine who may compete in their specific sport events.

### **Equity**

Equity refers to an environment that accepts the principles and practices of fair and appropriate allocation of resources and opportunities for all people in the Pole Sports community. Equity takes into account different needs and circumstances. It means providing opportunity for all people to succeed. Equity can be achieved by ensuring full access to information, programs and services.

**Competitive sport**

Sport activities for teams or individuals to prepare for and take part in competitions.

**High performance sport**

Competitive sport practised at the highest national and international levels by elite athletes that requires high degrees of physical, mental, technical and tactical preparedness, as well as experience.

**Mainstream sport**

All organised sport activities that fall under “able-bodied” sport.

**Participant with a disability**

Persons with different abilities practising sport, usually at a recreational or lower competitive level, and/or participating in sport in another capacity, such as coach, official, administrator, volunteer, etc.

**Partners**

Governments, non-governmental organisations, public and private sectors and communities participating in the delivery of government sport programs and initiatives.

**Recreational sport**

Pole Sports activities pursued as a pastime or leisure activity.

**Pole Sports for persons with a disability**

All aspects of Pole Sports performed or practised by people who have a physical (locomotor), sensory (visual impairment, hearing impairment), and/or intellectual/mental disability. It includes training, development, competition, safety, education and other technical requirements, as well as instructors, coaches, guides, officials, administrators, sport scientists, doctors, physiotherapists, and volunteers.