

USA PICKLEBALL ASSOCIATION
GUIDELINES ON TRANSGENDER PARTICIPATION
IN USAP-SANCTIONED EVENTS

1. Purpose of Guidelines.

USA Pickleball supports diversity and inclusion in tournament, recreational and league pickleball. At the same time, USA Pickleball supports the safety of our athletes and competitive fairness in USA Pickleball events. The purpose of these Guidelines is to provide information and guidance to pickleball tournament owners and operators (“Operators”) of USA Pickleball-sanctioned tournaments, recreational events, leagues and other events (“Events”) as they develop their respective eligibility rules and policies (“Eligibility Rules”) for their Events so they can provide a supportive and respectful environment for all players.

2. Four Fundamental Principles of These Guidelines.

When establishing Eligibility Rules for Events, Operators should take into account four important principles on transgender participation. These four principles include:

- a. Inclusion. USA Pickleball supports the creation of a supportive and respectful environment for all players. Participation in the sport has been clearly shown to enhance an individual’s mental and physical health. Operators should take into account the importance of inclusiveness in Pickleball, as it is a sport that can be enjoyed by everyone.
- b. Anti-Harassment. No harassment, stigmatization or improper discrimination on grounds of gender identity by any person will be tolerated.
- c. Competitive Fairness. It is also important for players to have competitive fairness in the sport. There are certain physiological advantages resulting from a transgender woman experiencing any part, or all, of male puberty. Specifically, strength, power, speed and jumping ability are physical characteristics directly related to competitive success in Pickleball. The scientific literature is clear that these physical characteristics would, in general, be positively enhanced during male puberty. What is less clear in the literature is the extent to which these puberty-related physiological advantages can be eliminated, or at least mitigated, through surgery or prolonged hormonal therapy.
- d. Safety. While Pickleball is not a contact sport, there are certain risks of injury and physical safety that can come into play, and one should consider whether Eligibility Rules could create additional injury risks.

3. Developing Eligibility Rules.

USA Pickleball does not mandate particular Eligibility Rules, as this is up to the Operators to determine. However, we do raise the following for Operators to consider when developing their Eligibility Rules:

- a. Understand the laws of your state and be sure to follow them to the extent they apply to your Events. It is important for you to understand if and how your state's laws may apply to you and take this into account when developing your Eligibility Rules.
- b. Competitive fairness tends to be less important for those age 12 and under where boys have not yet gone through puberty. Competitive fairness is often considered more important in higher levels of competition, but that may also vary by Event.
- c. USA Pickleball encourages you to consider an "open" category at your Events that would include men, transgender men, women, transgender women and nonbinary players. This is a way to be inclusive and allow everyone the chance to enjoy the fun and benefits of playing Pickleball.
- d. Consider whether certain programs at your events, such as recreational programs, can be open to all individuals regardless of birth gender, gender identity, transgender status or other forms of gender expression.
- e. If you do restrict transgender athletes from participating in certain gender-specific events, particularly the women's category of events, the restrictions should be limited to criteria intended to reduce or eliminate any advantages a transgender woman may have.
- f. Set out your Eligibility Rules clearly and in writing so everyone can understand them. It is important for competitors to know what your Eligibility Rules say before they enter your Event(s).