



**WATER POLO CANADA
2026-2027 ATHLETE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (AAP) POLICY**

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Additional attachments **to be provided to AAP identified athletes:**

- a. Water Polo Canada, Athlete Agreement;
- b. Sport Canada AAP Application;
- c. Sport Canada Direct Deposit form
- d. AAP Anti-Doping requirements

WATER POLO CANADA ATHLETE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (AAP) POLICY

1. Sport Canada's Athlete Assistance Program (AAP)

The Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) is a sport funding program of the Federal government (Sport Canada) that contributes to the pursuit of excellence. The AAP helps high performance Canadian athletes combine their sport and academic or working careers while training intensively in pursuit of world-class performances.

The Sport Canada Athlete Assistance Program's objectives are to:

- a. Financially support Canadian athletes identified by National Sport Organizations (NSOs) as performing at or having the greatest potential to achieve Senior International carding criteria at Olympic/Paralympic Games and World Championships;
- b. Assist Canada's carded athletes in preparing to engage in full- or part-time career activities; and
- c. Enable Canada's carded athletes to participate in year-round national training and competition regimes to further their athletic goals.

The Water Polo Canada (WPC) AAP must comply with the Sport Canada AAP Policies and procedures at the following link:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance/policies-procedures.html>

The WPC Athlete Assistance Program is intended to assist our National Team athletes to offset expenses incurred during training and competing. The program is not intended to meet all the needs of our national team athletes, but rather to complement or assist them. Under the program, carded athletes will be eligible to receive direct financial assistance to facilitate the attainment of their long-range goals of excellence at Olympic or world competition. Besides monthly living / training/ competition allowances, Sport Canada provides other financial assistances including tuition support. For more information on the AAP financial benefits, see section 8 of the Sport Canada AAP Policies and procedures.

1.1 Definition of Terms

An athlete committing full-time to the Senior National Team Program is one who is either living and training full-time at the National Training Center (Montreal) while following the prescribed training program assigned by the National Team Head Coach or designated coach, or one who is living and training elsewhere while still following the prescribed training program assigned by the National Team Head Coach or designated coach, and has been approved to do so by WPC.

2. AAP Carding Cycle

2.1 Carding cycle and number of cards

Athletes approved by Sport Canada will receive AAP funding for a maximum of a 12-month period from November 1 to October 31. However, in the case of athletes who meet the international criteria, they may be eligible to be nominated by WPC for two consecutive years; the card for the first year is referred to as an SR1 card, while the second year card is known as an SR2 card. The second year of carding is contingent on the athlete meeting the depth chart ranking standard, maintaining a training and competitive program approved by WPC and being re-nominated by WPC. The athlete must also sign an Athlete/NSO Agreement and complete an AAP Application Form for the year in question and the required online anti-doping courses.

The number of cards for each National Team Program may vary from year to year, depending on the performance of the program (s) and Sport Canada's policy. As of December 20th, 2024 Water Polo Canada receives the following number of cards (Sport Canada regularly reviews its allocation of cards to all eligible sport disciplines; therefore, these numbers are subject to change):

Men: 14 SR cards (\$365,400)
Women: 15 SR cards (\$391,500)

2.2 AAP carding levels and number of months of carding support

The current Sport Canada levels of carding are:

- a. **Senior International Cards (SR1 and SR2):** Athletes selected to the Senior National Team Talent Pool who placed top 8 and top 1/2 of field at Olympic Games (or World Championships in a non-Olympic year) may be eligible for nomination for a SR1 card (\$2,175/month). Athletes who meet the International Criteria are eligible to be nominated for two consecutive years; the first year card is referred to as SR1; the second, SR2. Furthermore, for the sport of Water Polo, in order for an athlete who was carded SR1 in the previous cycle to be eligible for a SR2 carding level, he or she must maintain a Top-13 ranking on the Water Polo Canada National depth chart applicable to that carding cycle.
- b. **Senior National Card (SR):** Athletes selected to the Senior National Team Talent Pool based on National Team Selection Criteria may be eligible for nomination for a Senior National Card. (\$2,175/month).
- c. **Development card (D):** Athletes selected to the Senior National Team Talent Pool, identified to Age Group National Team Program or selected to attend the National Training Center Program on a seasonal basis may be eligible for nomination for a D card (\$1,305/ month).

The number of months of carding support allocated to each athlete is determined by the National Team Head Coaches in consultation with the High Performance Director and is based on the athlete's commitment to the National Team Program (ie.: number of training and competition days the athlete will be involved during the carding cycle), the athlete position on the depth chart, the nomination criteria written in section 3.1, and the number of cards available.

3 Water Polo Canada (WPC) AAP Nomination Criteria and Procedures

3.1 Water Polo Canada AAP nomination criteria

AAP nominations will first be on the basis of selection to the Senior National Team Talent Pool. As Water Polo is a team sport, it is difficult to base selection to any program strictly on individual athletic performance and therefore subjective judgment is required. It is the responsibility of the Head Coaches to select the best possible group of athletes for the Senior National Team Talent Pool. To fulfill this responsibility, the Head Coaches will have a high degree of discretion and flexibility. The criteria outlined below will be the primary tool used by the Senior National Team Head Coaches in developing the National Team depth chart and to select the Senior National Team Talent Pool.

- a. Individual / team play characteristics
- b. Technical abilities and positional considerations
- c. Tactical knowledge
- d. Needs of the team to perform at the international level
- e. Physical characteristics and attributes
- f. Demonstration of personal characteristics required
- g. Attitude and team dynamics
- h. Statistical compilations from various events

This information will be used to determine an athlete's position on the Water Polo Canada depth chart, which will be updated at least annually and in accordance with the WPC AAP timeline as presented in section 5.1.

3.2 Prioritization of athletes for WPC AAP nomination

All nominated athletes must be available to attend key events as determined by the Senior National Team Head Coach and must be in a training situation deemed suitable by the Senior National Team Head Coach.

WPC will prioritize carding nominations in the following manner in its AAP submission to Sport Canada:

- a. Athletes selected for and committing to the Senior National Team Training Program, including athletes with WPC Approved Professional League contracts (Annex A of the Water Polo Canada Athlete Agreement) in the following order:
 - i. Athlete meeting the requirements SR1 and SR2 carding nominations

(section 2.2.a) by having played minutes in an official game at World championships or Olympic Games. As previously stated in section 2.2.a of this document, in order for an athlete who was carded SR1 in the previous cycle to benefit from an SR2 carding level, he or she must maintain a Top-13 ranking on the Water Polo Canada National depth chart applicable to that carding cycle.

- ii. Athlete meeting the requirements of SR nominations as prioritized by the national team depth chart.
- b. Remaining carding nominations will be allocated as prioritized by the National Team depth chart for athletes committing to the National Training Program (this can include Age Group National Team programs).
 - c. Athletes seeking re-nomination for health-related circumstances (or pregnancy), as outlined below:

A carded athlete who, at the end of the carding cycle has not achieved the standard required for the renewal of carding status because of strictly health related reasons, including pregnancy (see sections 9.1.3 and 9.1.4 of Sport Canada's Athlete Assistance Program Policies and Procedures), may be considered for re-nomination for the upcoming year provided the following conditions are met:

- i. The carded athlete has fulfilled all reasonable training and rehabilitation requirements aimed at a speedy return to full high-performance training and competition during the period of their injury, illness, pregnancy or other health-related circumstance, or is continuing a rehabilitation program approved by WPC;
- ii. In the view of WPC, the carded athlete's failure to attain the applicable carding standards is strictly related to the injury, illness, pregnancy or other health-related circumstance;
- iii. WPC, based on its technical judgement and that of a team physician or equivalent, indicates in writing to Sport Canada the expectation that the carded athlete will achieve at least the minimum standards required for carding during the upcoming carding period;
- iv. The carded athlete has demonstrated and continues to demonstrate their long-term commitment to high-performance training and competition goals, as well as their intention to pursue full high-performance training and competition throughout the carding period for which they wish to be renewed despite not having met the carding criteria;
- v. WPC must provide to Sport Canada evidence that the above requirements are being met in order to nominate athletes for carding based on the above provisions.

Please note: As per Section 5.4.1 of Sport Canada's AAP Policies and Procedures (under "Special Considerations for Team Sports"), reduced support may be provided to athletes who participate in a National Team program (...). The number of months provided to athletes under such circumstances will be determined at the sole discretion of Sport Canada but will not be

fewer than four months in a carding cycle. National Team approved training and competitive days may be calculated on a per month basis however, the months in which an athlete receives payment does not specifically relate to the months that they were involved with the National Team program. During the carding cycle, Water Polo Canada may add months for athletes initially nominated for fewer than 12 months, if team selection opportunities lead to further training and competitive days for that athlete (or as per 3.3.a.i below).

3.3 Other considerations for AAP carding nominations

The following considerations will apply to athletes under WPC Approved Professional League Contracts and athletes from the National Training Programs that are attending NCAA programs on a full-time basis:

a. **Professional League Contracts.**

All carded athletes approved by WPC to play under pro league contracts will be responsible for the costs associated to their relocation to the National Team Training Center within one week of the end of their league activities (or as instructed by the National Team Head Coach of their program), and / or as needed for mandatory National Team training camps and activities, as applicable (unless WPC budgets allow for the organization to cover such costs, in which case it will inform the athlete(s)).

b. **NCAA athletes.**

If identified by the WPC AAP policy, athletes who are attending any foreign post-secondary educational institution (including NCAA institutions) and are receiving an athletic scholarship in any sport are *not eligible* to receive AAP support in the months in which they are attending the foreign post-secondary educational institution. Athletes who are attending any foreign post-secondary educational institution (including NCAA institutions) and who are receiving financial aid but are not receiving athletic scholarship in any sport may be eligible to receive AAP support for a longer period.

4. AAP Nomination Appeal process

An athlete who wishes to appeal an AAP Decision shall have fifteen days from the communication of the decision for which the Appeal is being requested to initiate an Appeal.

For all matters related to this appeals process, please consult the Sport Canada's Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) policies and procedure, section 13.

5. WPC AAP Submission

5.1 Timeline

Every program year (September-August), WPC will attempt to respect the following AAP

timeline and administrative cycle:

- a. **September.** National Team Head Coaches' AAP identified and recommended athlete nominations to be submitted to Water Polo Canada with an updated national team depth chart.
- b. **October.** The High Performance Manager will inform identified athletes of their potential AAP status with Water Polo Canada. Identified athletes are to receive a WPC Athlete Agreement and Sport Canada AAP application forms. The WPC High Performance Director and / or Manager will inform in writing the currently carded athletes who are no longer identified for carding.
- c. **By October 20.** Initial WPC AAP submission to Sport Canada.
- d. **By October 31.** Yearly AAP review, date set by Sport Canada annually.
- e. **Post AAP review.** Confirmation and communication of AAP nominations as approved by Sport Canada.

Please note:

Additional nominations may be issued through the course of the Carding cycle, depending on possible remaining / unused quota, changes to the depth chart and /or Senior National Team Talent Pool, changes in athlete availability and commitments, etc.

For all nominated and approved athletes, retention of AAP status and the number of months during which they are Carded remain contingent upon the athlete's continued fulfilment of obligations outlined in the Athlete / NSO Agreement throughout the course of the Carding cycle.

5.2 Specific staff responsibilities with regards to the WPC AAP submission

5.2.1 Senior National Team Head Coaches' responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Senior National Team Head Coaches (men's and women's teams) to identify and recommend athletes for AAP nominations and to submit the following information by September 30th of each year, to WPC's HPD:

- a. A list of athletes to be carded with rationale for their selection which should include: depth chart ranking for their position and specific technical feedback;
- b. A list of athletes to be de-carded (previously carded, not nominated again for Carding support in the new cycle) with rationale;
- c. Up-to-date national team depth chart;
- d. Annual plan for the upcoming year including competition and training program and respective team planned selection dates;
Disclaimer: Finalized competitions plans are dependent on the availability of World Aquatics & Pan Am Aquatics calendars and are also dependent on levels of funding for each season.
- e. Suggested carding selection criteria that may differ from the previous year's;
- f. Provide a summary of National team results from the previous season by September 30th of each year to the HPD.

5.2.2 High Performance Manager's responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the High Performance Manager to:

- a. Inform identified athletes of their potential AAP status with Water Polo Canada.
- b. Ensure the transmission of all AAP required documents to the identified athletes

5.2.3 High Performance Director responsibilities

It is the HPD's responsibility to:

- a. Coordinate and prepare WPC AAP submission for approval to Sport Canada
- b. Ensure that the High Performance Manager forwards an annual AAP package to the nominated list of athletes. The AAP package will include:
 - i. Water Polo Canada Athlete Agreement;
 - ii. Sport Canada AAP Application including Direct Deposit information;
 - iii. Information about Sport Canada Tuition and Relocation supports;
 - iv. AAP Anti-Doping requirement details.
- c. Ensure proper communication of the AAP recipients as approved by Sport Canada
- d. Conduct a quadrennial review of the WPC AAP Policy
- e. Ensure annual updates to the WPC AAP Policy

5.3 Communication of AAP Decision

Once Sport Canada has informed WPC of the confirmed and approved AAP recipients, the HPD will forward a copy to the National Team Coaches and High Performance Manager and will inform the Provincial Associations when / as appropriate, and as soon as possible.

Individual carding will be initiated when the WPC Athlete Agreement and the Sport Canada AAP Application have been signed and received by the HPD, sent to, received and approved by Sport Canada.

5.4 Activation

Once the Carding Nominations have been approved by Sport Canada they can only be activated after an athlete signs the WPC Athlete Agreement and all their obligations have been fulfilled.