

Principles to Support Referees with Disabilities

Summary

In any sport, retired athletes are a rich source of potential officials. Once an athlete retires, transitioning into officiating allows them to retain a connection to their sport, and allows the sport to benefit from their years of sport experience and knowledge in a new role.

Currently, while retired boccia athletes, or other individuals with disabilities, can take referee training and become International Referees (IRs), there are no guidelines in place to support the international federation, competition hosts, trainers or the IR's themselves. This has placed IRs with disabilities in the challenging situation of having to negotiate directly with Competition Hosts and Head Referees for their accessibility and accommodation needs.

With the creation of the Procedures Manual, IR procedures (measuring, gestures etc.) became more formalized. This had the unintended consequence of placing additional barriers in front of IR's who require modifications or accommodations to complete the procedures as outlined.

In 2021, the Referee Committee struck a Working Group of referees with disabilities. The group included current and former IRs and also referees who completed national level referee training. The group met several times to discuss the challenges facing referees with disabilities.

The Working Group recommended the principles below as a starting point to help World Boccia shift towards a more inclusive approach for referees that is more representative of its vision of Boccia for All. These principles were adopted by the World Boccia board in June 2024.

Referees with Disabilities Working Group:

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Principles

- 1. World Boccia is committed to ensuring referees with disabilities will be provided with the support they need to succeed.**
- 2. International referee courses will be inclusive of learners with disabilities.**
- 3. International referee trainers will be educated about how to be inclusive of learners with disabilities.**
- 4. International referee selection will be impartial and inclusive of referees with disabilities.**

Implementing these recommendations may include:

- a. Updating the relevant World Boccia registration platform or Referee Certificate with a field for accommodation/ accessibility needs.*
- b. Developing policies to ensure an IR's disability does not impact selection for events.*