



**SOFTBALL CANADA  
WOMEN'S NATIONAL TEAM PROGRAM  
ATHLETE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (AAP) CRITERIA FOR NOMINATIONS FOR  
THE 2025-2026 CARDING CYCLE**

**1. GOAL**

The goal of the Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) is to provide financial support to athletes to train and compete successfully for Canada at major games (Olympics, Commonwealth, Pan American), and at World Championships. Athletes who are nominated for funding, and who are approved by Sport Canada for AAP financial support are referred to as 'carded' athletes. AAP funding is referred to as 'carding'.

**2. CARDING QUOTA**

Sport Canada has allocated the equivalent of 17 Senior Cards to the Women's National Team Program. Sport Canada has the right to revise the number of cards allocated at their discretion.

Eligible athletes will be nominated to the AAP in the following priority order:

- Athletes that meet the Senior international card criteria;
- Athletes carded at the Senior international card level the previous year that meet the health related issue clause;
- Athletes that meet the Senior national card criteria;
- Athletes carded at the Senior national card level the previous year that meet the health related issue clause;
- Athletes that meet the Development card criteria;
- Athletes carded at the Development card level the previous year that meet the health related issue clause;

**3. DURATION OF AAP CARDING**

The carding cycle begins on June 1st and ends on May 31st of the following year. Initial carding nominations will be announced by the National Coach no later than July 1. Additional nominations may be made at a later date. In 2024 there will be a series of training and competition events in the May to July time period which will be used to determine 2024/25 carding status.

**4. AUTHORITY FOR NOMINATION DECISIONS**

The National Coach has the full and sole authority to decide:

- How the quota of 17 Senior cards will be allocated into Senior and Development categories, based on the goals and objectives for the National Team (NT) Program;
- Who will be nominated to receive Senior and Development cards.
- How many carding months are allocated to each player. It is not automatic for an athlete to receive a 12 month card. An athlete may be carded for a shorter period of time based on AAP requirements, position on the depth chart, commitment to the NT program and the number of days involved in NT activities.

Note that Softball Canada does not approve AAP funding for athletes; it makes nominations to Sport Canada, who has final approval of all AAP matters.

## 5. ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible to be considered for AAP assistance, an athlete must:

- Be in good standing with Softball Canada
- Not be under suspension or sanction by Softball Canada or Sport Canada for a doping or doping-related offense;
- Be a Canadian citizen
- Agree to and sign any applicable Athlete Agreement as required by Softball Canada and Sport Canada.

In the event that an athlete is nominated for carding, and in order to maintain carding status, the athlete must continue to fulfill the above-listed requirements as well as any additional as set forth in the signed Athlete Agreement. Failure to satisfy the terms and conditions outlined above may result in the withdrawal of carding status.

## 6. CRITERIA FOR SENIOR CARDS

To be considered for a Senior Card, an athlete must:

- Have been selected to the Senior National Team athlete pool or be added to the pool at a later date.
- Achieved the Minimum Training Standards for their position or, in the Coach's discretion, be making suitable efforts towards achieving the standards (see Appendix B of the Women's National Team Handbook). Note that athletes unable to meet, maintain or make suitable progress towards the Minimum Training Standards over the course of the carding cycle may have their carding support withdrawn.
- Demonstrate through training and international competition the ability, as defined by the National Team's selection criteria, to compete at the international softball level.
- Improve performance (technical, tactical, physiological, and psychological) at training and in international competition, as communicated by the national coach and based on ongoing testing, performance monitoring and post-competition evaluations.
- Participate in training and performance monitoring programs as directed by the National Coach.
- Be available to play in all major events in the carding cycle including World Championships, and qualification tournaments, as applicable.

Position on the depth chart contributes to an athlete's nomination for Senior National Carding. Depth chart position is determined by the National Coach and is dependent on the following criteria:

- Previous and current performance
- Experience
- Positional requirements (primary and backup)
- Present and projected development and/or improvement
- Leadership/Contribution to team chemistry
- Availability for competition and training
- The depth chart, as developed from the evaluation criteria in Appendix A of the 2024 Team selection criteria

The Depth chart may be periodically updated.

An athlete may be selected to the Senior National Team but may not receive a nomination for carding.

### Senior Cards:

**Senior International Card (SR1/SR2):** for members of the Senior National athlete pool that were members of the team that placed in the top 8 and top ½ of the field at the most recent World Championships.

Athletes who meet the International Criteria are eligible to be nominated by their NSO for two consecutive years; the first-year card is referred to as SR1; the second, SR2. Eligibility for a SR2 card is contingent on the athlete maintaining a training and competitive program approved by the NSO, on being re-nominated by the NSO, on signing an Athlete/NSO Agreement and completing an AAP Application Form for that year.

### Maximum number of years at the Senior National Card level:

An athlete is normally expected to improve each year to maintain a Senior Card based on the national criteria. Once an athlete has been carded for more than 5 years at the Senior National level, to be recommended for additional years of carding support, the athlete must meet the International Senior carding criteria or clearly demonstrate continued progress toward being selected on the final roster of the Senior National Team.

Athletes that have reached this maximum number of years at senior will be informed in writing by Softball Canada of the minimum standard they must meet to be eligible for an additional year of AAP support.

## **7. CRITERIA FOR DEVELOPMENT CARDS**

To be considered for a Development Card, an athlete must:

- Be identified by the National Coach or National Coaching Staff as demonstrating superior development potential through:
  1. Performance at the National level (i.e., National Championships, Softball Canada hosted competitions, National Camps and/or Softball Canada training sessions)
  2. Recommendation by Provincial Associations/clubs or National Team contacts/scouts
- Achieve the Minimum Training Standards for their respective position, or in the Coach's opinion, be making suitable efforts towards achieving the standards (see Appendix B, of the 2024 Team selection criteria when it is available). Note that athletes unable to meet, maintain, or make suitable progress towards the minimum training standards over the course of the carding cycle may have their carding support withdrawn.
- Participate in National Team Programs as directed by the National Coach.
- Participate in year-round training programs and in periodic testing and monitoring as directed by the National Coach and National Coaching Staff.

As described within Section 6, nominations for Development Card Status will be assigned based on an athlete's position on the National Team Depth Chart, which can be periodically updated.

### **Maximum number of years at the Development card level:**

- Athletes previously carded at the Senior international levels are generally not eligible for a D card unless they were of Junior age when awarded the SR1/SR2 card.
- After being carded at the Senior national level (SR/C1) more than 2 years, Athletes may be eligible for nomination at the Development Card level, only one (1) time in her career unless they were Junior age when awarded the Senior national level card;
- In general a senior age athlete may be eligible for the Development card for a maximum of 4 years. To be recommended for additional years of carding support, the athlete must meet the Senior national carding criteria or clearly demonstrate continued progress toward being selected on the final roster of the Senior National Team.
- While eligible for the Junior Program, there will be no limitation on the number of years an Athlete will be eligible at the Development Card Level (years during which an Athlete can be involved with the Junior Development Program);

## **8. HEALTH RELATED ISSUES**

Should an athlete who has been approved for carding the previous year become injured, ill or pregnant to the extent that the athlete cannot sustain high performance training for a period longer than 30 days, the athlete must immediately notify the National Coach. To continue to receive carding assistance during the current carding cycle, the athlete must provide the National Coach with a detailed rehabilitation and recovery plan that includes the following:

- A medical doctor's diagnosis of injury or illness;
- A medical doctor's prognosis for the athlete's return to high performance training and competition;
- Detailed rehabilitation and return-to-training schedule

The National Coach may consult the Softball Canada Team Physician in review of submitted documents.

An athlete who is eligible to be considered for carding and who is seeking carding, but who is injured or ill to the extent that she cannot fulfill the carding criteria described in this document may nonetheless be nominated for carding at the sole discretion of the National Coach. In exercising such discretion, the National Coach may require that the athlete supply a medical doctor's diagnosis and prognosis for recovery, and may consult with the Softball Canada team physician for review. The National Coach will exercise his discretion in this manner only in very exceptional circumstances.

## **9. APPEALS**

Appeals of Softball Canada AAP nomination/re-nomination decision or of a Softball Canada's recommendation to withdraw carding may be pursued only through the Softball Canada's review process, which includes an application to the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada (SDRCC). Appeals of AAP Decision made under Section 6 (Application for and Approval of Cards) or Section 11 (Withdrawal of Carding Status) may be pursued through Section 13 of the AAP Policies, Procedures and Guidelines.