



March 26, 2021

PA-2021-04

## Policy Alert

SUBJECT: Additional Guidance Relating to P-1A Internationally Recognized Athletes

### Purpose

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is issuing policy guidance in the [USCIS Policy Manual](#) to update and clarify guidance for internationally recognized athletes (P-1A nonimmigrants).

### Background

The P-1A nonimmigrant visa classification is available, in part, to a person who performs, individually or as part of a team, as an athlete at an “internationally recognized level of performance.”<sup>1</sup> This update provides more detailed guidance regarding the required prospective level of performance. In addition, the update provides USCIS’ interpretation of the undefined regulatory phrase “major United States sports league or team” as it relates to these internationally recognized P-1A athletes.<sup>2</sup>

This guidance, contained in Volume 2 of the Policy Manual, is effective immediately and applies prospectively to P-1A petitions filed on or after March 26, 2021. The guidance contained in the Policy Manual is controlling and supersedes any related prior guidance on the topic.

### Policy Highlights

- Clarifies that the regulatory phrase “major United States sports league” at 8 CFR 214.2(p)(4)(ii)(B) is interpreted to mean one that has a distinguished reputation commensurate with an internationally recognized level of performance, and “major United States sports team” means a team that participates in such a league.<sup>3</sup>
- Describes non-exhaustive examples of information and evidence relevant to evaluating whether an entity is a “major United States sports league or team” for the purpose of adjudicating P-1A petitions for internationally recognized athletes or teams.

---

<sup>1</sup> See [INA 101\(a\)\(15\)\(P\)\(i\)](#). See [8 CFR 214.2\(p\)\(1\)\(i\)](#).

<sup>2</sup> See [8 CFR 214.2\(p\)\(4\)\(ii\)\(B\)](#).

<sup>3</sup> This interpretation aligns with the statute, which requires that internationally recognized athletes perform “at an internationally recognized level of performance,” and is consistent with USCIS’ longstanding adjudicative focus on that statutory requirement.

- Explains how to evaluate whether events or competitions have a distinguished reputation and are at an internationally recognized level of performance.

**Citation**

Volume 2: Nonimmigrants, Part N, Athletes and Entertainers, Chapter 2, Eligibility Requirements [[2 USCIS-PM N.2](#)]; and Chapter 4, Documentation and Evidence [[2 USCIS-PM N.4](#)].