

USA Deaf Sports Federation Announces Inaugural Performance Psychology Team for 2025 Tokyo Deaflympics

Innovative initiative provides Deaf and Hard of Hearing athletes with mental health and sports performance support to optimize performance and well-being.

BUCKEYSTOWN, MD, UNITED STATES,

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Inspired by Olympians who have courageously spoken about mental health, sports psychology, personal well-being, and who have taken time off to take care of themselves, including Simone Biles and Naomi Osaka, [USA Deaf Sports Federation \(USADSF\)](#) recognizes that personal

well-being is critical to optimizing performance on and off the field. In recognizing the close relationship between mental health, mental preparation, and sports performance, USADSF has partnered with the [University of Western States' Sport and Performance Psychology program](#) to establish USADSF's inaugural Performance Psychology team to support Deaflympians as they prepare for and compete in Tokyo during the [2025 Deaflympics](#) from November 15-26, 2025.

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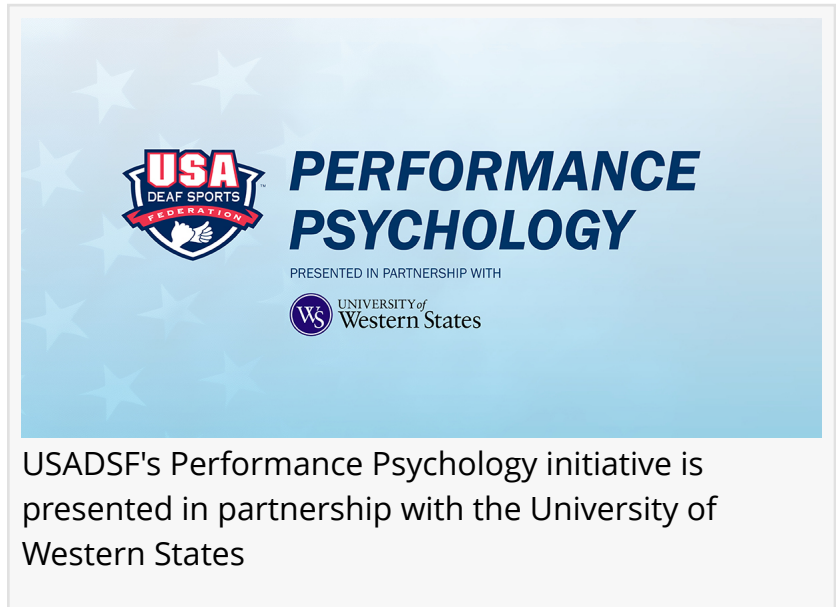
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Dr. Becky Clark

The Performance Psychology team is led by the trailblazing Deaf mental performance consultant Dr. Becky Clark. A three-time Deaflympian, Licensed Clinical Social Worker/Psychotherapist, and U.S. Sports Envoy with the U.S. Department of State, Dr. Clark possesses over 30 years of experience in working with deaf and hard of

hearing athletes in mental performance and mental health, and deaf and disability sport with individuals and teams from recreational to elite athletes and coaches.

Dr. Skip Flanagan, former professional baseball player, joins USA Performance Psychology team



as its second Deaf sports mental performance consultant. Dr. Flanagan is also the RIT-NTID Student-Athlete Coordinator and co-founder of the National Deaf Athletic Center.

The USA Performance Psychology team includes certified mental performance consultants, licensed mental health therapists, and doctoral students specializing in mental performance and/or mental health from the University of Western States (UWS)—where Dr. Clark is an adjunct faculty member.

As part of this innovative partnership with UWS, Dr. Sarah Castillo, CMPC, Dr. Gily Meir, CMPC and five doctoral students in their final year (Sports Performance and Psychology program) join the team to provide mental performance and mental health support services to approximately 200 Deaf American athletes.

They are also undergoing structured training in collaboration with USADSF to include a focus on developing an understanding and appreciation of Deaf Culture, competency in the basics of American Sign Language (ASL) provided by Dr. Clark and Dr. Flanagan and developed in collaboration with USADSF, to include a focus on developing an understanding and appreciation of Deaf culture, competency in the basics of American Sign Language (ASL), how to work with ASL interpreters, appropriate delivery of mental performance/mental health services, and development and maintenance of effective relationships with athletes through the delivery of group and individual training opportunities virtually prior to the 2025 Games.

"This initiative provides an unprecedented level of performance and mental health support for Deaflympians," said Dr. Clark. "We are committed to supporting these athletes in optimizing their overall performance and mental well-being and ensuring they are at their best on the world stage."

This initiative, which is funded by UWS as well as a supporting grant from California Baptist University, also aims to address a dearth of research on mental performance training and mental health services for deaf and hard of hearing athletes at all levels. Little is known about mental performance consultants (MPC) and licensed mental health counselors/therapists' work with Deaf/Hard of hearing (HH) athletes. Lack of funding, communication barriers, limited accessibility, along with few culturally-competent trained professionals, contribute to an overall lack of resources and services available for Deaf and Hard of Hearing athletes. As part of this initiative, USADSF also looks to build the capacity of mental health/sports mental performance to serve Deaf and Hard of Hearing athletes as well as inspire members of the Deaf sports community to explore a career in sports psychology.

As there is limited infrastructure currently available that caters to the unique mental performance and mental health needs of Deaf and Hard of Hearing athletes, this initiative aims to demystify the ways in which mental health care, well-being, and sports psychology can positively impact outcomes for Deaf and Hard of Hearing athletes.

Jeffrey Mansfield, USADSF President, remarked, "The Deaflympics represent the pinnacle of Deaf

sports; as a former athlete, I have experienced firsthand how mental health and sports psychology are extremely invaluable in not just maximizing performance, but also in creating the most empowering environment possible for Deaf and Hard of Hearing athletes. When Dr. Clark approached us about this idea, we saw an opportunity to bring increased awareness, support, and resources that could empower our athletes to be their best selves and to perform at their fullest. As many of us advanced through elite sports without these resources, we could not be more thrilled to see this idea become a reality for our athletes.”

About the USA Deaf Sports Federation

USA Deaf Sports Federation (USADSF) is the national governing body of Deaf sports in the United States. USADSF is a member of the International Committee of Sports for the Deaf (ICSD), the Pan-American Deaf Sports Organization (PANAMDES), and the Affiliate Organizations Council of the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC).

USADSF is a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit. Our mission is to empower USA Deaflympic and Deaf National Teams to continuously reach their highest competitive potential and inspire our communities and society. Our vision is a world where Deaf and Hard of Hearing people shall thrive in all aspects of sport and society with the full provision of equal access and opportunities for participation.

USADSF serves thousands of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Americans by promoting accessible sports environments and experiences for Deaf and Hard of Hearing athletes and ensuring that the athletes’ unique communication needs are met. Since its founding in 1945 as the American Athletic Association for the Deaf (AAAD), USADSF has produced hundreds of Deaflympic, Paralympic, and Olympic champions.

The USADSF does not discriminate based on race, religion, national origin, gender, age, orientation, handicap, or veteran status.

For all inquiries related to this news or general inquiries, please contact us at info@usdeafsports.org.

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