

**BlazeSports Institute for Applied Science**

**Certified Disability Sport Specialist (CDSS)  
Level I, II, III & IV**

Ensuring Community-Based Competencies in Disability Sport  
Services for Persons with Physical Disabilities



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## Background

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BlazeSports America, a national non-profit organization, is the direct legacy organization of the 1996 Atlanta Paralympic Games. For more than a decade, BlazeSports has been building a Paralympic sport pipeline throughout the country and has served over a quarter million children and youth, young adults and athletes with physical disabilities through our members, programs and network of clubs.

As recently as two years ago, the disability sport community lacked a formal process or organization that evaluated the competencies, experience, and training of professionals in the field. This void was glaring, and it had significant consequences across the spectrum of competition, from recreational participation to elite level sport. In the absence of such a system, there was no way to ensure that service providers possessed the knowledge and the ability to deliver safe programming to the standards of best practice.

Recognizing the necessity of such a system, BlazeSports stepped in to remedy this problem. In 2009, we founded the BlazeSports Institute for Applied Science (BIAS), which functions as both a curriculum and an independent process of review, evaluation, and credentialing of volunteers, coaches, and professionals engaged in all levels of disability sport programming. To ensure that BIAS incorporates the latest in theoretical and practical knowledge, the process is overseen by a panel of experts from related fields and disciplines, including therapeutic recreation, sports science, sports medicine, adapted physical education, rehabilitation medicine, and Paralympic sport.

BIAS is designed to benefit people at all different levels of engagement in disability sport. Through their participation in the CDSS program, volunteers, coaches, and professionals can all demonstrate to employers and organizations that they are leaders in disability sport. The credential signifies the ability to provide safe, effective disability sport programming and knowledge of the latest research in the field. Further, the certification enhances existing credentials such as CTRS, CPRP, PT, OT, and others by demonstrating specialized knowledge in disability sport.

Through BIAS, professionals can be credentialed as one of four levels of Certified Disability Sport Specialist (CDSS). These levels of accreditation are based on educational background, professional/work experience, continuing education, completion of the BIAS CDSS Curriculum, and successful completion of exams. The BlazeSports staff works closely with candidates to determine which level of certification is appropriate for their individual situations.

It is not necessary to progress through the levels. For instance, an applicant with appropriate education and experience may be initially certified in Level III without progressing through Levels I & II.





**Level I** focuses on developing and certifying competencies in areas such as risk management, injury prevention, wheelchair maintenance and repair, person-first language, the ADA, and wheelchair transfers. Upon completion of the CDSS Level I certification, the individual will possess the skills necessary to deliver safe, appropriate, and effective programming to the standards of best practice.

**Level II** builds on the fundamental skills developed in Level I and cultivates the abilities necessary to offer direct programming at the highest standard possible. Course topics include planning and goal setting, Paralympic sport structure and classification, mental skills training, wheelchair sizing and fitting, and the role of technology in disability sport. With the CDSS Level II certification, the candidate will have the knowledge and the ability to implement disability sport programming that exceeds the basic provision of services.

**Level III** certification is designed to help hone the skills of those who are looking to become leaders in disability sport on a regional and national level. The Level III curriculum will further educate candidates on current issues in disability sports, event management, sport administration, gender issues, and advanced topics in mental skills training and disability sport technology. After attaining CDSS Level III, professionals will have the set of tools that will empower them to affect change not only in their local program, but also on a national scale as leaders in the disability sport movement.

**Level IV** is the highest level of certification. As he or she pursues this level, the candidate will explore subjects necessary for leadership on the international level. Level IV topics include current issues in the Paralympic movement, sport for peace and diplomacy, international exchange programs, and disability sport development in Third World countries. Upon completion of the Level IV program, the individual is certified as possessing the skills and knowledge necessary to serve as a global leader in the Paralympic Movement.

# CDSS I Minimum Eligibility Criteria

## Disability Sport Technician Category

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The applicant must fulfill the following:

1. Requisite fieldwork, internship and/or direct experience – One (1) sport season of verifiable direct service in:
  - a. Disability and/or Paralympic sport
  - b. Therapeutic use of physical activity with persons with physical disability to advance health, quality of life, physical functioning and performance, prevention of secondary medical conditions and chronic illness, and community reintegration;

**and:**

2. Successful completion of BlazeSports Institute for Applied Science Level I CDSS Curriculum;
3. Current CPR/First Aid certification or equivalent for international candidates preferred but not required;
4. Successfully meets minimum scores on written and oral examinations administered by BlazeSports America (waived during grandfather period);
5. Complies with re-certification application and continuing education requirements to maintain credential.
6. Applicants for Level I Certification must be at least 21 years of age.



# CDSS II Minimum Eligibility Criteria

## Senior Disability Sport Technician Category

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The applicant must fulfill the following:

1. Requisite fieldwork, internship and/or direct experience – One (1) year of verifiable direct service in:
  - a. Disability and/or Paralympic sport;
  - b. Therapeutic use of physical activity with persons with physical disability to advance health, quality of life, physical functioning and performance, prevention of secondary medical conditions and chronic illness, and community reintegration;

**and:**

2. Successful completion of BlazeSports Institute for Applied Science Level II CDSS Curriculum;
3. Current CPR/First Aid certification or equivalent for international candidates;
4. Successfully meets minimum scores on written and oral examinations administered by BlazeSports America (waived during grandfather period);
5. Complies with re-certification application and continuing education requirements to maintain credential.



# CDSS III Minimum Eligibility Criteria

## Disability Sport Practitioner Category

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Post-secondary coursework or verifiable continuing education in:

1. Studies must be from an accredited institution of higher learning and comply with field-related degree requirements and also include the following:
  - a. 3 semester hours in etiology and medical implications of physical disability or equivalent CEUs; and
  - b. 3 semester hours in sports training, applied physiology or equivalent CEUs; and
  - c. 6 semester hours in disability/Paralympic sport and Paralympic sport classification, equivalent course, or equivalent CEUs; and
  - d. 3 semester hours sport risk management, or equivalent CEUs
2. Requisite experience - Two (2) verifiable years (one (1) year with bachelor's degree or equivalent) of full-time work experience in:
  - a. Disability and/or Paralympic sport
  - b. Therapeutic use of physical activity with persons with physical disability to advance health, quality of life, physical functioning and performance, prevention of secondary medical conditions and chronic illness, and community reintegration;
3. Current CPR/First Aid certification or equivalent for international candidates
4. Successful completion of BlazeSports Institute for Applied Science Level III CDSS Curriculum;
5. Successfully meets minimum scores on written and oral examinations as appropriate administered by BlazeSports America (both waived during current grandfathering period);
6. Complies with re-certification application and continuing education requirements to maintain credential.



# CDSS IV Minimum Eligibility Criteria

## Senior Disability Sport Practitioner Category

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Minimum of Bachelor's degree or equivalent and:

1. Degree studies must be from an accredited institution of higher learning and comply with field-related degree requirements and also include the following:
  - a. 3 semester hours in etiology and medical implications of physical disability or equivalent CEUs; and
  - b. 3 semester hours in sports training, applied physiology or equivalent CEUs; and
  - c. 6 semester hours in disability/Paralympic sport and Paralympic sport classification, equivalent course, or equivalent CEUs; and
  - d. 3 semester hours sport risk management, or equivalent CEUs
2. Requisite professional experience – Four (4) verifiable years of full-time work experience in:
  - a. Disability and/or Paralympic sport
  - b. Therapeutic use of physical activity with persons with physical disability to advance health, quality of life, physical functioning and performance, prevention of secondary medical conditions and chronic illness, and community reintegration;
3. Current CPR/First Aid certification or equivalent for international candidates
4. Successful completion of BlazeSports Institute for Applied Science Level IV CDSS Curriculum;
5. Successfully meets minimum scores on written and oral examinations as appropriate administered by BlazeSports America (both waived during current grandfathering period);
6. Complies with re-certification application and continuing education requirements to maintain credential.





## Application Process

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Submit the completed application form to BlazeSports America, Inc. and the following:

1. Current resume;
2. Verification of degree and post-secondary coursework if relevant (transcript and copy of degree as appropriate with requirements of certification level);
3. Verification of continuing education and/or CEUs as relevant;
4. For CDSS II, III & IV verification of CPR/First Aid certification or equivalent for international candidates;
5. For CDSS I - IV copy of BlazeSports documentation of successful completion of BlazeSports Institute for Applied Science CDSS Curriculum (offered annually);
6. Completed and signed verification form of field-based experience;
7. Successfully passes the written and oral certification test (waived during grandfather period);

## Grandfather Clause

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BlazeSports America will be offering a two-year grandfathering period during which time applicants for Certified Disability Sport Specialist Level I, II, III& IV certification will not be required to take the written or oral examinations. All other certification requirements must be met.

## Renewal Process

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Certification will be valid for a two-year period at which point individuals with a CDSS certification must submit an application for continued certification. Verification of continuing education/training will be required every four years. Credits will be given for continuing education and training sessions specific to disability sport, for disability sports coaching experience and for a variety of professional service experiences. For more information on the Certification Renewal Process visit: [www.blazesports.org](http://www.blazesports.org).

## Alternative Format

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If you have a disability and the format of any materials on our website interferes with your ability to access the information, please contact BlazeSports at [info@blazesports.org](mailto:info@blazesports.org) or 404-270-2000. To enable us to respond in a manner that will be most helpful to you, please indicate the nature of the accessibility need and your preferred format (electronic format, Braille, large print, etc.).

# BIAS CDSS Level I Curriculum

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## **Risk Management**

The areas of risk within disability sport and the manageable components within each area that help minimize risk.

## **Injury Prevention and Management**

The various physical disabilities and the injuries most common to each. The medical issues that are of concern across the various physical disabilities.

## **Wheelchair Repair and Maintenance**

The common parts of manual sport wheelchairs including common options in cushions, backrests, wheels, inner tubes and push rims. Standard and routine maintenance requirements for manual sport wheelchairs including necessary tools.

## **Wheelchair Transfers**

Common methods and proper technique for assisting transfers and independent transfers.

## **Disability Etiquette**

Appropriate etiquette for interacting with people with physical disabilities.

## **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

The five areas of protection provided by the ADA to individuals with disabilities, legal exceptions, enforcement and advocacy.



# BIAS CDSS Level II Curriculum

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## **Paralympic Sport Structure**

National governance of Paralympic sport by National Paralympic Committee (NPC), Disabled Sport Organization (DSO) and National Governing Body (NGB).

## **Paralympic Sport Classification**

Eligibility to compete, grouping of athletes for competition, evolution and future direction, categorization by disability and sport.

## **Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD)**

Canadian Sport for Life model, physical activity and skill development from birth to adulthood, physical activity for life.

## **Planning and Goal Setting**

The four types of plans that lead to a successful season and the manageable components of each. The three main categories of goals, their interdependence and proper use.

## **Mental Skills Training (MST) I**

History, principles, skill categories and place in holistic training.

## **Wheelchair Sizing & Fitting**

Proper fit for peak performance by sport, classification and disability.

## **Technology in Disability Sport I**

Peak performance through the use of advancements in sport and specific applications in disability sport.



# BIAS CDSS Level III Curriculum

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## **Current Issues in Disability Sport**

Various national topics, may include: classification, physical activity and organized sport in the school setting, coaching certification, transition from local and regional to national competition, relevant federal statutes and policies.

## **Gender Issues in Disability Sport**

Various national topics, may include: limited opportunities, impact of participation at recreational level, development of all female teams and leagues, grassroots advocacy, liability of successes.

## **Disability Sport Administration**

Components of a unified administrative program with regard to activities, policies, procedures, and standards of athletic programs. Issues found in both the management and leadership roles of coaches and administrators.

## **Event Management**

The knowledge and skills used in the planning, management and after action reporting of special events and competitions.

## **Mental Skills Training (MST) II**

Developing and implementing mental skills training into your program.

## **Technology in Disability Sport II**

Justification, procurement and use of advancements in sport and specific applications of technology in disability sport to reach peak performance.



# BIAS CDSS Level IV Curriculum

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## **Current Issues in the Paralympic Movement**

Various national and international topics, may include: gender issues, classification, Paralympic Sport Program and introduction of new sports, IPC Sport Governance, International Sport Organization for the Disabled (ISOD), International Federations (IF), media presence of the Paralympic Games.

## **Sport for Peace and Diplomacy**

Cooperative program development and delivery in developing countries; the need, sources of funding, potential impact and benefit for participants and program providers.

## **International Exchange Programs**

International BlazeSports Clubs and Programs, benefits, funding opportunities and impact of cultural exchange in the short and long term.

## **Disability Sport in Developing Nations**

Opportunities, impact and need to increase participation, training, and resources.

## **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**

Human rights obligations of countries that ratify the CRPD to promote, protect, fulfill, and ensure the rights of persons with disabilities, special focus on Article 30 - sports and recreation.

