



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Potential Applicants for the 2026 U.S. Dressage Festival of Champions

**Date:** May 28, 2025

**From:** Kristen Brett, Director, Dressage Special Events

**Copy:** Hallye Griffin  
Laura Roberts

**Re:** Qualifying Dates and Competitions for the 2026 USEF Dressage National Championships for the Children, Pony Rider, Junior, and Young Rider Divisions.

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***This preliminary information is being provided to assist you with your competition planning and may be subject to change. Please remember that this information is based upon the recommendations of the USEF Dressage Sport Committee and the final qualifying requirements are subject to approval by the USEF Board of Directors, Executive Committee, or an Ad Hoc Selection Group approved by the USEF Board of Directors.***

**Date and Location:** The 2026 U.S. Dressage Festival of Champions ("Championships") is scheduled to take place on August 24-30, 2026, at HITS Lamplight Equestrian Center in Wayne, IL.

**Qualifying Period:** The qualifying period for the 2026 USEF Dressage National Championships for the Young Rider, Junior, Pony Rider, and Children divisions will begin on July 22, 2025, and end on July 27, 2026.

For these Championships, qualification is athlete/horse or athlete/pony combination based. Therefore, the athlete cannot change during the qualifying period.

**Qualifying Competitions:** Qualifying Competitions include national USEF/NAYC Qualifying Competitions, as well as U.S. and foreign CDI-Ch, CDI-P, CDI-J, or CDI-Y events. However, a combination cannot earn a score in a national Qualifying Competition if their respective CDI division is also offered at the same event. Qualifying Competitions held over the course of a weekend are considered one qualifying opportunity, even if they have separate license/recognition numbers.

The list of national USEF/NAYC Qualifying Competitions is available on the USEF website [here](#). The 2025 FEI Calendar can be found [here](#) and please note that the 2026 FEI Calendar will not be published on this link until approved by the FEI, no later than December 31, 2025.

Scores earned from the 2025 U.S. Dressage Festival of Champions cannot be used towards qualifying for the 2026 U.S. Dressage Festival of Champions.

Scores earned from the 2025 FEI NAYC can be used towards qualifying for the 2026 U.S. Dressage Festival of Champions if held during the qualifying period.

**Age Requirements for Athlete and Horse:**

A combination must fit into one of the following age categories to earn scores and to compete at the Championships:

- a. Children:
  - Athletes are eligible to compete in this Championship from the beginning of the calendar year in which they reach twelve (12) until the end of the calendar year in which they reach the age of fourteen (14).
  - Horses/Ponies must be six (6) years old or over.
  - Both horses and ponies are eligible to compete in this division.
- b. Pony Rider:
  - Athletes are eligible to compete in this Championship from the beginning of the calendar year in which they reach twelve (12) until the end of the calendar year in which they reach the age of sixteen (16).
  - Ponies must be six (6) years old or over.
  - Only ponies are eligible to compete in this division.
- c. Junior:
  - Athletes are eligible to compete in this Championship from the beginning of the calendar year in which they reach fourteen (12) until the end of the calendar year in which they reach the age of eighteen (18).
  - Horses must be six (6) years old or older.
- d. Young Rider:
  - Athletes are eligible to compete in this Championship from the beginning of the calendar year in which they reach sixteen (16) until the end of the calendar year in which they reach the age of twenty-one (21).
  - Horses must be seven (7) years old or older.

**Qualifying Tests:** Hors de Concours entries are not permitted in USEF/NAYC Qualifying classes. Combinations must obtain at least two (2) scores from the current editions of the FEI Team Test and the FEI Individual Test in their respective age division during the qualifying period.

Qualifying tests at national Qualifying Competitions must be judged by a panel of at least two (2) FEI or USEF 'S' judges. For CDI Events, [FEI Dressage Rules](#) apply.

**Junior and Young Rider:**

- a. For combinations qualified to compete in GAIG/USDF Regional Championship classes, FEI Junior and FEI Young Riders may also earn qualifying scores in their respective FEI division in GAIG/USDF Championship classes. Qualifying information for GAIG/USDF Regional
- b. Championships can be found on the USDF website [here](#). For these scores to be counted, scores must be reported by athletes via the USEF CDI, CPEDI and Championships Report form by the deadlines indicated on the form.
- c. In cases where USEF/NAYC Qualifying classes are held in addition to a GAIG/USDF Regional Championships, scores earned in FEI Junior and Young Rider Qualifying classes are automatically recorded. This means that an athlete may report their scores from the GAIG/USDF Regional Championship Jr and YR Team Championship class(es) as an additional team score.
- d. Combinations competing in the Children, Junior or Young Rider divisions may also earn scores at the FEI North American Youth Championships if held during the qualifying period (see Ranking List Score Calculation below).

**Ranking List Score Calculation:**

- a. USEF will automatically track scores for combinations which are earned at national Qualifying Competitions.
- b. For all divisions, scratches, eliminations, and withdrawals will not be penalized.
- c. **CDI Scores:** CDI scores are calculable at the option of the athlete and will only be computed into the combination's overall average upon receipt of a USEF CDI/CPEDI Report Form within the specified deadline stated on the form to the USEF Dressage Department. Scores submitted late will not be accepted. It is the sole responsibility of the athlete to ensure that all qualifying CDI scores for these championships are submitted to USEF on time and are accurate.

**Questions:** If you have any questions regarding the above, please do not hesitate to contact the USEF Dressage Department at [festival@usef.org](mailto:festival@usef.org).