

SUMMER ZOO CAMP 2025

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES



Thank you for considering Summer Camp with the Buffalo Zoo!

Please read through the following policies and procedures to make sure that all campers have an exciting, fun and positive experience this summer.

WHAT TO BRING:

Bring to Camp

- A nut free lunch and snack
- Comfortable Clothes
- Water Bottle (campers will visit refill stations during day)
- Shoes to walk and play in (No Flip Flops, crocs discouraged)

Leave at Home

- Money/Cash
- Electronic Devices (games, phones, etc.)
- Slime
- Valuable Personal Items
- **ALL peanut or nut products**

MORNING DROP OFF

Campers should be dropped off to the right of the front entrance of the zoo (northeast end of the parking lot). Please park in the lot and walk your child to the drop off line. Drop off will open at 8:50 a.m. and close at 9:15 a.m. Parking will be free of charge for pick up and drop off. When you enter the parking lot, please take a parking slip. If you are in the parking lot for less than 15 minutes, parking at the Zoo is free and you may follow normal directions to exiting. If you are in the parking lot longer than 15 minutes for pick up or drop off, please ask camp for a complementary parking voucher that will allow you to exit the lot free of charge.

LATE ARRIVALS/EARLY PICK UPS

We ask that if it is at all possible to schedule regular appointments, doctor visits, etc. outside of camp hours that you please do so. However, if you need to drop your child off late or pick them up early on any given day, please let us know as much ahead of time as possible. If you have an appointment, emergency, or some other situation that cannot be avoided during camp we will do our best to accommodate your schedule.

AFTER CAMP PICK UP

Camp pick up will take place at the same location as drop off. The camp gate will be unlocked for pick up starting at 3:00 p.m. Campers will **only** be released to adults listed on registration paperwork. A signature is required and ID may be requested from each adult picking up campers. Any campers remaining after 3:30 p.m. will have to be picked up at the front gate of the zoo and will be charged \$1 for every minute after 3:45 they are picked up. If you know you will be late, please call (716) 995-6123 and leave a message.

If campers will be picked up at the end of the day by anyone other than the person (s) indicated

on your registration, please email with the name of the additional pickup person. Additional names may be added ahead of time by contacting the camp director at (716) 995-6123 or emailing rbajdas@buffalozoo.org.

PARENTAL VISITATION POLICY

Zoo camp and all of its spaces are for the use of campers and camp staff only. Parents and guardians should only be in camp spaces during morning drop off and afternoon pick-up times. The only exception to this rule is when parents need to enter camp spaces at pre-determined times for the purposes of late drop offs and early pick-ups. If this is the case, this should be discussed with the camp director before the fact.

CAMP GEAR

Each camper will receive a logoed water bottle and a drawstring bag. It is encouraged that campers bring these every day to carry personal belongings, stay hydrated, and for identification as a camper.

NAMETAGS

Your camper will receive a nametag upon arrival to camp with their name and group on it. Nametags stay at camp through the week, but if it makes it home with your camper, please have them bring it the following day. This helps with identification of campers and aids in safety and group management.

GROUPS

Zoo camp will have up to 90 campers every day. These campers will be split into 6 groups of up to 15, based on age and preferences listed in camp registration. There will be 2 counselors for each group of 15.

COUNSELORS

Counselors at the Buffalo Zoo go through a selective interview process. All counselors for summer camp are either pursuing or have graduated from a Bachelor's or Master's program in education or the natural sciences, and have years of previous experience working with children. They are all background checked and go through a week-long training period, where all safety policies and camp best practices are reviewed. Adult docent volunteers will be helping out with camp as well. They also go through training and a background check.

FIRE DRILLS

Fire drills will take place every Monday during camp. There are two exit points from the upstairs school classrooms– the main stairs and the back staircase. Each classroom has a chart showing which exit staircase their group should use in case of fire. Counselors are trained to count kids and lead them to a safe area. Counselors are also trained to respond to medical, natural and other emergencies that could possibly come up at camp.

NUTS AT CAMP

Due to the prevalence of nut allergies in our camper population **WE DO NOT ALLOW NUT PRODUCTS OF ANY KIND AT CAMP. This includes peanuts and tree nuts.** Please respect this and double check your camper's lunch each day.

WEATHER POLICY

We are an active camp and spend a good portion of our day outside on Zoo grounds. Camp activities continue as planned even if it is raining. Exceptions include:

- Heavy rain/downpour
- Thunder and Lightning: requires immediate moving of campers to an indoor/sheltered location.
- Any other extreme event that would require campers to be inside.

Please dress your child accordingly and if needed, apply sunscreen and/or bug spray prior to arriving at camp. Your child may bring these items with them to reapply, but are not allowed to share with others.

SICK POLICY

Vomiting results in immediate call for pick-up from camp. It will be left to the parents to decide if the child is well enough to return to camp on the following day.

Diarrhea results in immediate call for pick-up from camp. As is the policy in most schools, pre-schools, and day care centers, any child sent home due to diarrhea should be free of symptoms for 24 hours before returning to camp.

Lice results in immediate call for pick-up from camp. We have a strict "no nit" policy regarding lice. Any camper who is diagnosed with head lice may not return to camp unless they are completely nit-free.

Fever above 100.5 results in immediate call for pick-up from camp. Any camper must be fever and COVID symptom free before returning to camp. A COVID test is strongly encouraged. Any child who tests positive for COVID will not be allowed to return to camp for 10 days or a negative test result. Refunds or exchanges may be made on a case to case basis.

COVID POLICY

The Buffalo Zoo Summer Camp will follow the guidelines of the New York Department of Health. Please see <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/schools-youth> for updated policies.

Currently, wearing a mask is optional for campers. COVID policies, including mask requirements, are subject to change at any point. Please screen your camper for symptoms before camp each day.

FIRST AID POLICIES & PROCEDURES

The Zoo has staff who have completed Red Cross First Aid training and are fully equipped to deal with most first aid issues that arise during the camp day. Minor first aid issues will be recorded and reported to the camper's pickup person at the end of the day. Any injury or condition that is beyond the scope of basic first aid techniques will warrant a call to parents.

Basic first aid techniques include the use of the following as needed:

- Band-Aids
- Cold packs
- Antiseptic wipes (Benzalkonium Chloride)
- Triple Antibiotic Ointment
- Alcohol Wipes
- Sting relief swabs (Benzocaine and Menthol)

If you do not want your camper to receive any of the above treatments, please email camp staff prior to your camper attending camp.

If your camper will be bringing medication to camp, or has first aid circumstances that camp staff should be aware of, please contact the camp director before camp to create a medical plan (i.e. a camper with asthma bringing an inhaler to camp) and ensure that The Buffalo Zoo is able to accommodate your camper's needs.

EPIPEN ADMINISTRATION

Campers who carry and bring EpiPens to camp with them may either keep the EpiPen on their person or give to a counselor to carry for the day. Please contact the camp director if your camper plans on bringing a EpiPen with them to camp.

The Zoo has staff who have completed the Anaphylaxis and Epinephrine Auto-Injector Administration Red Cross training and are able to assist and/or administer EpiPen injections. All camp counselors and docents are coached in recognizing and reporting the signs of anaphylaxis.

BEHAVIOR AND HEALTH POLICY

Please provide us with the tools necessary to give your child the best possible experience at Zoo Camp by giving additional information about special considerations you may have listed on camp registration. This may include additional information on

- Allergies
- Medical Conditions
- Accessibility concerns
- Behavioral, psychological, or emotional conditions
- Other special consideration

Sharing extra information with the camp director, such as the following, with us can be immensely helpful and make the camp experience positive for everyone involved.

- Signs to watch for
- Common Triggers
- Methods for preventing or helping with situations that may arise
- Details of any Individualized Education Plans (IEP) or Behavior Plans used with your child at school.

Zoo Camp is likely a good fit for your child to attend on their own if

1. They are predominantly independent (must be able to eat, toilet, and dress themselves independently).
2. They have an effective communication system that they can use independently or with minimal assistance.
3. They can actively participate in a group setting without negatively impacting other group participants. Inappropriate behaviors include running away, kicking, hitting, pinching or biting, displays of consistent defiant behavior (This includes, but is not limited to the following: constant refusal to stand in a line, constant refusal to participate in a variety of activities, constant refusal to abide by classroom rules)
4. They do not possess a serious medical problem that requires a nurse or qualified health aide for constant supervision.

If your child requires one-on-one supervision or needs assistance with any of the above, they are still welcome to attend camp, but are expected to attend with an aide, caregiver, or respite provider (who will attend camp at no additional charge).

If necessary, please contact the camp director to discuss your child's needs and ensure that Summer Camp at the Buffalo Zoo will be a good match for your camper.

While we will make every attempt to provide reasonable accommodations for campers, the camp will not accept or tolerate children that are (1) of danger to themselves, (2) of danger to others, or (3) a disruption to the normal activities making it unreasonably difficult for other children to enjoy camp programs. Any of the above reasons will be grounds for dismissal from camp. The decision to remove a child from a camp program, whether it be for the day or the entire camp, will be based on the discretion of the camp director.

REFUNDS

Requests must be made in writing at least one week prior to the start of Summer Zoo Camp in order to receive a refund. Fees will NOT be refunded for any reason after this date.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the camp director, Rachael Bajdas, at rbajdas@buffalozoo.org or (716) 995-6123.

Looking forward to a fantastic summer at the Zoo!

Rachael Bajdas

Camp Director

(716) 995-6123

rbajdas@buffalozoo.org

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