

ZOO CAMP POLICY HANDBOOK



CONSERVATION
SOCIETY OF
CALIFORNIA
TAKING ACTION FOR WILDLIFE

OAKLAND ZOO

Updated: January 2026

INTRODUCTION

Our online handbook contains information regarding camp policies and operations as they pertain to our campers and their families. It is the responsibility of the caregiver to take the time to read, understand, and seek clarification for any of the contents within this handbook. By registering for ZooCamp, caregivers agree to all policies and protocols outlined in this handbook. To set our camper(s) up for success, we highly encourage caregivers to include the camper in the reading of this handbook to give them the most realistic account of what to expect at camp.

This program is under the direction and supervision of the Learning & Engagement Department within Oakland Zoo. Our camp staff have experience working with and teaching students of all ages. Camp staff are mandated reporters and are trained and certified through American Red Cross with first aid, CPR, and AED. All staff members pass a national background check and complete training in behavior management, abuse recognition, animal information, curriculum, and inclusive practices.

This handbook is subject to updates. Please check ahead of each camp season for any new information from ZooCamp management.

ZOOCAMP MISSION

ZooCamp is a space where life is celebrated and nurtured. We respect the diversity of life we find reflected in our people, our plants, and our animals.

Our goal at ZooCamp is to provide a physically and emotionally safe environment in which campers and staff alike develop and practice our skills of communication, compassion, and scientific thinking.

Through hands-on exploration, play, and community building, campers will deepen their connections to themselves, each other, and our natural world.



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CAMPER PICK-UP AND DROP-OFF

DROP-OFF PROCEDURES

- We offer a 30-minute drop-off window between **9:00-9:30 AM**. As you enter through our main gate, follow the signage by turning left toward our Maddie's Education Center.
- There are reserved parking spots near our building. If these spots are occupied, please find another available parking space. Please note that guests are **prohibited** from parking in Animal Emergency Response spaces, which are labeled.
- Caregivers must be present for drop-off for the camper's safety and in the case that staff may have information to relay to caregivers. Campers are not authorized to be dropped-off curbside.
- Our gate remains locked until 9:00 AM. If you arrive early, please wait outside the gate at the Lower Entrance.
- On the first day of camp, staff will review camper information forms including but not limited to: allergies, medications, and wellness questionnaire responses with caregivers.
- For our summer program **ONLY**, campers receive one (1) complimentary ZooCamp shirt that must be worn daily. Campers may change into this shirt in our restrooms. Additional shirt available for sale at pick-up (see page 6).

LATE DROP-OFFS

- Planned: We kindly ask you let camp staff know ahead of time by emailing zoocamp@oaklandzoo.org.
- Unplanned: Call the ZooCamp cell phone at 510-340-1455 upon arrival, and camp staff will meet you outside the gate at the Lower Entrance.

PICK-UP PROCEDURES

- We offer a 30-minute pick-up window between **3:00-3:30 PM**. As you enter through our main gate, follow the signage by turning left toward our Maddie's Education Center.
- There are reserved parking spots near our building. If these spots are occupied, please find another available parking space. Please note that guests are prohibited from parking in Animal Emergency Response spaces, which are labeled.
- Our gate remains locked until 3:00 PM. If you arrive early, please wait outside the gate at the Lower Entrance.
- Only people added to the authorized pick-up list may be allowed to pick-up the camper, regardless of familial relation. **All pick-up people will be asked for ID.**

CAMPER PICK-UP AND DROP-OFF

PICK-UP PROCEDURES (CONT.)

- Authorized pick-up people may only be added to our list by the caregiver of the camper who registered them for camp.
- If anyone not on the authorized pick-up list is attempting to pick up a camper, camp management will need to call the caregiver on file. This process may take up to 10-15 minutes.
 - To add to the authorized pick-up list, email zoocamp@oaklandzoo.org.
- If camp staff has anything to share about the camper's experience, they may be asked to step aside for private conversation. Any private conversation may be joined by camp management.
- Additional camp shirts may be purchased by caregivers at our merchandise table for \$15, or 2 for \$25 at pick-up.

EARLY PICK-UPS

- If a camper must be picked up early, we kindly ask you let camp staff know ahead of time by emailing zoocamp@oaklandzoo.org.
- Campers may be in any given location within Zoo grounds, and it may take 15-20 minutes for campers to return to our Education Center, gather their belongings, and be escorted to the gate for pick-up. Therefore, we do not allow early pick ups between 2:00-3:00.
- Upon arrival, call the ZooCamp cell phone at 510-340-1455, and camp staff will meet you outside the gate at the Lower Entrance.
- All aforementioned pick-up procedures apply.

LATE PICK-UPS

- The gate to our Education Center closes promptly at 3:30 PM. Any campers who are not picked up by 3:30 will be brought down to after care, located in Zimmer Auditorium.
- Late fees are incurred at \$1/minute for late pick-ups.
 - We allow one 10-minute grace period per session. This grace period may be retracted with repeat late pick ups.
 - Fees incurred for late pick-ups will be charged at the end of the session.
- If an unexpected situation arises, such as traffic, please contact us as quickly as possible by calling the ZooCamp cell phone at 510-340-1455 so we can inform your camper.
- All aforementioned pick-up procedures apply.

CAMPER PICK-UP AND DROP-OFF

EXTENDED CARE

- ZooCamp offers both before care and after care as add-ons.
- ZooCamp is unable to accommodate single-day use of extended care.
- All extended care is held in Zimmer Auditorium. The doors to the building remain **locked at all times** for camper safety. Please use the doorbell for pick-up and drop-off.
- The staff supervising extended care may not be your camper's camp instructor. If you want to ensure information reaches their instructor, please email camp management at zoocamp@oaklandzoo.org.

BEFORE CARE

- Before care is held from **8:00-9:00 AM**. Drop-off is allowed any time between 8:00-8:50 AM. If your camper is enrolled in before care, and you arrive between 8:50-9:00, you will be asked to wait until the regular drop-off window to allow our staff to transition.

AFTER CARE

- After care is held from **3:30-5:30 PM**. Pick-up is allowed any time within this window.
- If your camper is NOT enrolled in after care, and they are not picked up within the regular pick-up window, they will be brought to after care. Please refer to ZooCamp's late pick-up policy.
- All aforementioned pick-up procedures apply.

HEALTH & SAFETY POLICIES

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

- During registration, you are required to submit a medical form for each camper. We ask you share any and all relevant medical history that may impact your camper's experience.
- Oakland Zoo employs EMT medical staff in their Public Safety department. ZooCamp does not have their own medical staff. Any time an EMT responds to a camper medical incident, caregivers will be notified by camp management immediately.
- If a camper experiences a medical emergency at ZooCamp, staff are trained to administer first aid, as needed, and call emergency services (911). If an ambulance is required, the cost is the responsibility of the camper's caregiver.

CAMPER MEDICATIONS

- Any medication, including over-the-counter (OTC), epi-pens, or inhalers, must be included on the medical forms.
- Medications must be in the original packaging that identifies the prescribing physician, name of medication, dosage, and frequency of administration.
- ZooCamp staff is not permitted to supply any OTC medication to campers. If your camper suffers allergies, headaches, etc., it is your responsibility to send them to camp with medication such as Benadryl, Tylenol, etc. and communicate this with camp staff.
- Camp staff may not administer medication; any OTC or prescription medication must be self-administered unless a medical emergency prevents the camper from doing so. Camp staff may assist with self-administration.

WEATHER EMERGENCIES

- In the case of a natural disaster, Oakland Zoo staff will adhere to the Zoo's emergency protocols. All Zoo staff undergo frequent natural disaster emergency drills. All camp staff carry emergency evacuation maps on their person at all times when in the presence of campers. While extremely rare, if camp must close early for a weather emergency, all caregivers and emergency contacts will be notified via email first, then by phone.
- If Oakland Zoo decides to preemptively close to the public for weather-related incidents such as rainfall, high winds, etc., **ZooCamp will be cancelled**. Pro-rated refunds will be issued at the end of the session. Camp staff will alert caregivers of any upcoming cancellations the day prior at pick-up as well as via email.

HEALTH & SAFETY POLICIES

CAMPER ILLNESS

- If a camper exhibits any symptoms of illness including but not limited to fever, runny nose, coughing, or sneezing, ZooCamp reserves the right to send them home for the day. Campers are welcome to rejoin the program as soon as symptoms subside. Refunds will not be issued for absences related to illness.
- If a camper is recovering from an illness and is no longer contagious but has lingering symptoms, they will be asked to wear a facemask. Refusal to wear a mask will result in a call home for early pick-up.

COVID-19 POLICY

- If a camp participant tests positive for COVID-19 within 1 week of the start of their session, they will not be able to join camp until symptoms subside. Session transfer requests may be made, space permitting.
- If a camp participant tests positive for COVID-19 midway through their camp session, they will be sent home and will not be able to rejoin until symptoms subside. ZooCamp staff will alert caregivers of a potential exposure. No refunds will be made for elective withdrawals due to potential exposures.
- There are some behind-the-scenes experiences where camp participants will be asked to wear a facemask, regardless of symptoms, to protect our animals from potential exposure to illness. Campers who refuse to wear a mask will not be able to join in those experiences.

LICE PROTOCOL

- If a camp participant learns of a lice infestation within 1 week of the start of their session, they will not be able to join camp until symptoms subside. Session transfer requests may be made, space permitting.
- If a camp participant experiences a lice infestation midway through their camp session, they will be sent home and will not be able to rejoin until symptoms subside. ZooCamp staff will alert caregivers of a potential exposure. No refunds will be made for elective withdrawals due to potential exposures.

ZOOCAMP BEHAVIOR POLICY

The behavior policy is set in place in order to maintain a physically and emotionally safe environment. Campers are expected to:

1. **Be kind with their words** by using appropriate language and treating every person with respect.
2. **Be kind with their bodies** and respecting other's personal space by asking for consent, keeping hands and feet to themselves, and refraining from unwanted or unnecessary physical contact.
3. **Be kind to our space** by respecting Zoo grounds as well as all forms of life, including the plants and animals on and off exhibit.
4. **Use quiet voices** around sound-sensitive animals.
5. **Take responsibility** for their own personal items at camp and respect other people's belongings.
6. **Be an active participant** in ZooCamp activities by staying with their group at all times and maintaining a positive attitude.
7. **Communicate** with camp staff when they need support.

When a camper struggles with these expectations, ZooCamp staff will work with them in the following ways:

1. Remind them of expectations and seek to understand their challenges.
2. Provide them space away from the group or activity to reset, reflect with staff, or decompress.
3. Call their caregiver to discuss ongoing challenges and engage them in making a plan to support the camper.
4. If all other efforts to support them are unsuccessful, we reserve the option to dismiss them from camp.

Certain behaviors that bring harm to Zoo animals, Zoo property, ZooCamp staff, or other campers may warrant skipping of steps. Oakland Zoo reserves the right to dismiss any camper from the ZooCamp program. No refunds will be issued when campers are dismissed from the program for violating behavioral expectations.



PARAPROFESSIONAL SUPPORT AT ZOO CAMP

PURPOSE

ZooCamp is committed to providing an inclusive, supportive environment where all campers can participate fully in camp activities. Campers who require individualized support for medical, behavioral, or personal-care needs may attend camp with a paraprofessional at no additional cost. Families must notify camp administration in advance if they plan to provide a paraprofessional.

PARAPROFESSIONAL REQUIREMENTS

To ensure the safety and well-being of all campers, paraprofessionals must meet the following requirements:

- Interview: All paraprofessionals must participate in an interview with camp leadership prior to the start of camp. This ensures alignment with camp expectations, communication protocols, and camper support needs.
- Background Check: A background check is required and the cost is covered by Oakland Zoo.
- Qualifications: Paraprofessionals must be at least 18 years old and have relevant experience supporting children or youth in educational, therapeutic, or recreational settings. Direct family members are not permitted to join as a paraprofessional unless they are the person to support in the aforementioned settings.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Paraprofessionals are present to support the individual camper they accompany. Their responsibilities include:

- Providing one-on-one assistance as needed for the camper's success and safety.
- Supporting participation in activities while following the direction of camp staff.
- Maintaining appropriate professional boundaries and conduct at all times.
- Communicating regularly with camp staff regarding the camper's needs, progress, or concerns.
- Following all camp policies, including behavior expectations and safety protocols.

Paraprofessionals may not independently lead activities, supervise other campers, or perform duties outside the scope of supporting the assigned camper.

REMOVAL OR DISMISSAL

The camp reserves the right to remove a paraprofessional from camp if they fail to follow camp policies, compromise camper safety, or disrupt camp operations. In such cases, the family will be notified immediately to discuss alternative support options.

CAMPER EXPECTATIONS

CAMPER ATTIRE

- Campers must come to camp in close-toed shoes. Sandals and crocs are not permitted. If a camper shows up in sandals or crocs, camp management will call home to request an alternative pair, and campers may be required to sit out of activities, such as behind-the-scenes experiences.
- We recommend our younger campers bring alternative pairs of socks and underwear in case of emergency.
- Summer ZooCamp:
 - Registration includes one (1) complimentary shirt per session, and campers are required to wear their provided ZooCamp shirt each day.
 - If layers are preferred due to weather, campers may wear jackets, sweatshirts, etc. over their camp shirt, however their nametag must be worn on their outermost layer.
- Fall/Winter/Spring ZooCamp:
 - Camp t-shirts are not included in registration, and are therefore not required.
- Additional camp t-shirts are available for purchase at pick-up each day.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

- Campers are strongly discouraged from bringing personal items to camp that hold any monetary or sentimental value.
- Electronic devices, such as cell phones and tablets, are prohibited from use at camp unless for medical accommodations or emergency purposes.
- Campers are strongly encouraged to have any and all personal belongings labeled with first and last name, including but not limited to, water bottles, trading card binders, lunch boxes, or books.
- Oakland Zoo is not responsible for any lost, damaged, or stolen items.

LUNCHES AND SNACKS

- ZooCamp does not provide lunch or snacks to campers. Campers are expected to bring two (2) snacks and one (1) lunch each day.
- If a camper drops their food, misplaces their food, or eats their food and is still hungry, camp staff may provide 'emergency snacks' or 'emergency lunches'. Camp staff will always refer to the Dietary Restrictions and Allergies form responses provided by caregivers at registration prior to providing food.
- In the case of dropped or missing lunches, camp management will call home to request a drop-off.
- If providing snacks and lunch for the camper causes a financial burden, please contact zoocamp@oaklandzoo.org for a support plan.

REGISTRATION POLICIES

HOUSEHOLD REGISTRATIONS

- Only legal guardians of campers may enroll campers in ZooCamp, as the adults on file are our primary contacts in case of emergency, behavioral reports, authorized pick-up checks, or illness.
- Campers who are enrolled within a household that they do not live in may be subject to cancellation.

SUMMER SESSION THEMES

- Campers may only attend one "A"-themed session and one "B"-themed session for a maximum of two (2) total camp sessions per summer.
- Currently, our registration software does not have the option to uphold this limit; it is the responsibility of the caregivers to adhere to this session limit at the time of registration.
- If duplicate themes are booked, the duplicate registration(s) will be subject to cancellation with applied fees aligned with the cancellation policy below.

CANCELLATION POLICY

- Cancellation within 7 days of camp: Not eligible for refund
- Cancellation 7-14 days before camp: 50% refund
- Cancellation 15+ days before camp: 90% refund

Cancellations must be processed through email. Please contact zoocamp@oaklandzoo.org to request a cancellation.

SESSION TRANSFERS

- Campers are allowed one (1) free session transfer per season (space permitting).
- Additional transfers are subject to the cancellation fees detailed above.
- We cannot accommodate session transfer requests that are made within 2 weeks of the session.

FRIEND REQUESTS

- During registration, campers may list names of friends who are also attending camp to request the same group placement. While ZooCamp does our best to accommodate these requests, they are not guaranteed.
- Friend requests for campers in other age groups cannot be accommodated.
- Group transfers mid-session are not always possible, as we often are fully booked. We will not be able to break our camper ratio to accommodate friend requests.

PHOTOGRAPHY

PHOTO AND VIDEOS

We occasionally take photos and videos of campers for use in educational or promotional materials including social media posts, website banners, flyers, and presentations. All camper nametags are blurred. We will never identify individuals by name or sell images to other organizations.

All photos will be made available after camp through a shared folder. All participants of that week will have access to the photos.

ZooCamp places priority on camper, animal, and staff safety, and the quality of lived experiences over opportunities to document activities. We will do our absolute best to take as many photos as we can; however, we do not guarantee a set number of photos for any given week, nor that photos of your camper will be taken. Photos may be taken by a variety of staff and over different devices, so quality may vary.

There are some behind-the-scenes activities where photos are prohibited.