

## Camp Inclusion FAQ's

### **What is our Camp Inclusion philosophy?**

Everyone benefits when children of all abilities play and learn together. Every child should have the opportunity to participate in our conservation education programs with appropriate supports.

### **What inclusion services can the Zoo provide?**

The Zoo has trained educators who work to meet the needs of all 10-16 campers in their group. They can make minor accommodations as needed.

When children require more significant support, there are three additional camp inclusion specialists. However, they are available to support any of the 112 campers that require it. Each camp inclusion staff person serves multiple campers, often in different groups.

Campers for whom our inclusion model works well are able to participate in activities in a group of 10 -20 campers with one or two educators, **without** a camp inclusion staff person for **most** of the day. (See additional criteria below.)

Campers needing the one-on-one support of an assigned aide or para may bring their own support person, provided that person passes a criminal background check, is fully vaccinated and complies with all of our covid policies.

### ***Campers that the Zoo's inclusion staffing levels can support:***

- Do not require 1:1 support during the school year
- Are able to stay with a group in public places
- Need only occasional short breaks away from the group
- Are able to understand and follow simple directions, with occasional help and reminders
- Can maintain appropriate social distancing when needed and can successfully wear a mask
- Can tolerate high temperatures and being outside most of the day
- Can walk independently for long distances each day, unless a wheelchair or other device is needed
- Do well with multiple transitions each day and some level of unpredictability

### ***Campers that will require an aide (provided by their families):***

- Require 1:1 support during the school year
- Need help with self-care (eating and toileting)
- Are an elopement risk (have a tendency to run away from groups/adults)
- Have significant impulse challenges that cannot be easily redirected (i.e. Cannot understand that the food & attractions they see while at camp are not available to them.)
- Cannot spend the majority of the day doing the same activities as the group
- Need 1:1 support to understand and follow a group plan
- Struggle with transitions and unpredictability
- Are significantly challenged by sensory input (animal noises, smells, warm temperatures)

### ***Campers that Zoo Camps cannot successfully support:***

- Need a therapeutic camp rather than an inclusion model
- Are unable to be in large groups much of the day
- Have aggressive behaviors with adults or peers or self-injure
- Have impulse control challenges that prevent them from being safe in a large, open public setting

### Why does the Zoo require more supports than school or home?

The Zoo is a large, open public space, which is very different than a classroom with walls, a door and a fenced in playground. While there are many benefits to outdoor learning, we recognize that for some campers it poses real challenges. They can feel overwhelmed and unable to focus, or struggle to stay with the group, and unlike running down a school hallway, they are running through thousands of strangers in a place that also has trains, large animals and bodies of water. A 1:1 aide allows campers to have the supports they need to succeed, while maintaining a safe educator to camper ratio.

### What if my child's chronological age and development do not correlate?

Our programs are developmentally appropriate for the set age range listed. We realize that sometimes developmental level does not correlate to chronological age. If this is the case, you can reach out to us to determine the best placement for your child. Only children under 18 and within a 2 year age range will be considered for a modified placement.

### Which camp is best for my child?

Camp KangaZoo	Specialty Camp
Larger group sizes	Smaller group sizes
More outside time	Less outside time
More walking	Less walking
Some large group activities of up to 98 campers	All small group activities of 12 campers
More active environment	More academic environment

### What can parents do to prepare their camper for success?

- Visit the Zoo ahead of time and discuss how a family visit is different than a camp day
- Schedule a time with Inclusion staff to become familiar with the program
- Practice ahead of time new or challenging skills or routines (unpacking and eating lunch, eating sitting on the ground, carrying a water bottle, etc.)
- Hike/walk long distances of 2-4 miles
- In advance, share with inclusion staff as much as possible about your child so that we can best meet their needs

### Who do I reach out to with Camp inclusion questions?

Shayle Wigger at [Swigger@stlzoo.org](mailto:Swigger@stlzoo.org) can help with any camp inclusion questions.