

Teen Wild Guides

FAQs



What does a Teen Wild Guide do?

Teen Wild Guides are trained to be interpreters, working at interactive stations in the Children's Zoo teaching visitors about animals. This is a TWG's primary duty, and will always be a part of their volunteer service. As teens develop in the program, they can earn the opportunity to move into additional opportunities available to Teen Wild Guides. These opportunities can include working at stations in the main zoo, working with animal keepers on "Keeper Days" and learning to handle small animals as a Lead TWG.

Do the teens get to work directly with animals?

Teen Wild Guides are primarily interpreters and educators, and are not Animal Management volunteers, which requires a minimum age of 18. However, all Teen Wild Guides work with animals in the contact yard, monitoring visitors' interactions with our goats, sheep and domestic animals, as well as assisting keepers with cleaning and care. TWGs who stay current with their hours and exhibit satisfactory performance can begin working on twice monthly "Keeper Days" after one full semester of service. Additionally, after 150 hours of service, TWGs are eligible to apply to become a Lead Teen Wild Guide, which gives them the opportunity to gain experience in leadership as well as training in how to handle our small education animals.

How often are Teen Wild Guides required to work?

TWGs are required to work a minimum of two shifts per month during the school year (September through mid-June) and 1 shift per week during the summer (mid-June through August). A standard TWG shift is all day, from 9:30-4:00.

How old do I need to be?

Potential TWGs must be between the ages of 13-18 to be eligible for the program.

My teen is not yet 13- is there any chance they could be admitted early?

We will consider candidates who are 12 years old if they will turn 13 *before* the next application period. We cannot accept candidates who are younger than 12 $\frac{3}{4}$ for any other reason.

When can I apply?

We accept new Teen Wild Guides 3 times per year, for our winter, summer, and fall sessions. In general, orientations are held in December (winter session), April (summer session) and August (fall session). Please refer to the zoo's Calendar of Events or to the "Application Process" section of the Teen Wild Guide page for a list of upcoming orientation, application and training dates.

I turned in my application but haven't heard back yet- did you get it?

If you are unsure of whether your application has been received for the most recent TWG application period, you may contact the Director of Teen Programs at (510) 632-9525 x207 or kgarchar@oaklandzoo.org. You may not have heard from us yet for a few reasons: Generally, we do not contact applicants for an interview until the end of the open application period, so if your application was turned in early, it may take awhile before you hear from us. Additionally, we are unable to schedule interviews for applicants who have not turned in a completed application, which includes 2 main pages, a personal essay and 2 letters of recommendation. If your application is missing any of these elements, you will not be contacted for an interview, so it is best to make an effort to turn in all parts of your application together.

I am not able to attend one or more of the required training dates, can I do a make-up training?

Attending training, including training with your class, is crucial to being a well-prepared volunteer. We plan trainings carefully to fit in all required information and provide the best experience possible. Additionally, we have a very tight schedule. For these reasons, we are unable to provide make up trainings for any reason. Please check training dates carefully, to ensure that you will be able to attend all trainings before applying for that session. If you will have to miss any trainings, we will ask you to wait until the next training session to become a Teen Wild Guide.