

# Summer 2026 ZOO CAMP Handbook



Updated January 2026

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# WELCOME TO ZOO CAMP!

## OUR GOAL

Cheyenne Mountain Zoo Camp aims to spark and foster a lifelong love for nature and animals as well as introduce or develop lifelong passions for activities that tie youth directly to wildlife and/or wild places. Through live animal presentations, games, Zoo hikes and time with nature, Camp Educators will help campers provide a link between people and the natural world.

## MISSION STATEMENT

A leader in conservation, captive breeding and animal care, Cheyenne Mountain Zoo connects people with wildlife and wild places through experiences that inspire action.

## VISION STATEMENT

Every Kid. Every Time. Goosebumps!

Every kid, of any age, will have an experience of a lifetime with every visit.

## OUR STAFF

Our Camp Educators are people from various backgrounds whom all share a passion for environmental education and conservation with at least 480 hours in the field.. Our Camp Staff have been background checked, drug tested, CPR/First Aid Certified and have completed the following pre-service trainings through Colorado Shines Professional Development Information System:

- Injury Prevention for Day Camp Programs
- Medication Administration
- Standard Precautions, including Prevention & Control of Infectious Diseases and Immunizations
- Recognizing & Reporting Child Abuse & Neglect
- Emergency & Disaster Preparedness
- Recognizing the Impact of Implicit Bias

Our Camp Staff have also completed in house trainings on youth protection, group management, developmental ages & stages, developmentally appropriate language and impacting mental, emotional, and social health for children.



# POSITIVE GUIDANCE

## POSITIVE GUIDANCE

At Cheyenne Mountain Zoo Camp we strive to help campers build social skills, self-control, and emotional executive function. We understand that this is best achieved through establishing healthy relationships between campers and their Camp Educators, establishing and following predictable routines, creating developmentally appropriate experiences, and communicating/modeling clear expectations for behaviors. Physical discipline or punishment is strictly prohibited. Our goal is to create a space where campers can grow in their affinity for nature, friendship skills, independence, interest in exploration, confidence, responsibility, and teamwork. All desired youth outcomes are documented and available to view anytime.

Our Camp Staff partner with parents/guardians to support a positive and successful camp experience for all campers. We view all behavior as a form of communication and strive to communicate in a meaningful way to teach individuals. In the event that a difficult behavior persists, Camp Staff will communicate with parents/guardians to formulate tangible action steps for redirection. If reasonable efforts have been made and the camper continues to exhibit behaviors that are especially difficult to support, the camper may be expelled from the program, regardless if the camper has a disability. The following behaviors are not tolerated or permitted at camp and may result in the immediate dismissal of the camper:

- Lewd behavior
- Intentionally running away/leaving from the group
- Biting , hitting or other forms of violence
- Use of profanity, vulgarity or obscenities
- Damaging Zoo property
- Endangering or threatening to endanger the health and safety of themselves or others
- Physical, emotional, or sexual harassment of any kind



# YOUTH PROTECTION

## YOUTH PROTECTION

Cheyenne Mountain Zoo is committed to providing a safe and nurturing environment for all campers, where they can learn, grow, and have fun while participating in our programs. We seek to maintain a culture of openness, accountability, and vigilance in safeguarding the rights and safety of all campers. We have a zero-tolerance policy for any form of child abuse, harassment, or misconduct. Camp staff, campers, and parents are encouraged to communicate any concerns or suspicions related to child safety promptly. All camp staff are required to undergo training on recognizing and responding to child abuse, youth protection training and the camp's policies and procedures.

Camp staff are expected to treat all campers with respect, dignity, and kindness. All staff must not engage in any form of abuse, harassment, bullying, or inappropriate conduct toward campers. Camp staff must report any concerns or suspicions of child abuse to camp leadership immediately. All allegations or reports of child abuse will be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly.

Camp staff, campers, and parents are encouraged to report any concerns or suspicions related to child safety immediately to the following individuals:

- Brittanie Ford—Community Programs Supervisor: [bford@cmzoo.org](mailto:bford@cmzoo.org)
- Colorado Springs Police Department: (719) 444-7595

Reports can be made anonymously if desired, and no individual will face retaliation for reporting in good faith.

All reports and investigations related to child abuse or misconduct will be handled with the utmost confidentiality to protect the privacy of all parties involved. Violation of this Youth Protection Policy may result in immediate dismissal from the camp, and appropriate legal actions may be taken.

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure that it remains effective and up-to-date. By adhering to this Youth Protection Policy, we aim to create a safe, nurturing, and enjoyable camp experience for all campers.



# CHECK-IN & CHECK-OUT

## CHECK-IN & CHECK-OUT

Check-in begins at **8:45am and ends at 9:00am**. If your camper arrives after 9:00am, please approach our admissions booths and let the staff member know you are here for Zoo Camp. One of our camp staff will arrive shortly to bring your child to their group.

Check-out begins at **3:45pm and ends at 4:00pm**. If your camper has not been picked up by 4:00pm, you can expect a call from their Camp Educator asking for your ETA. Late fees will be enforced.

**\*Campers will check-in and check-out at the EdVenture Gate, located just behind the large Elevation Sign at the front of our Zoo. (Elevation Sign pictured below)**

**\*\*May be changed based on construction updates. You will be informed if this changes.**



### Authorized Pick-up:

**Bring a valid state issued I.D. daily for check-out. Campers are only released to approved adults listed on camper's registration information.** In the event that a non-authorized adult attempts to pick-up a camper, camp staff will attempt to call the camper's emergency contact for authorization. If authorization cannot be confirmed, the camper must wait until an authorized adult arrives for pick-up. Late fees will be enforced. Additional trusted adults can be added through your camper's DocNetwork portal or by contacting camp staff at (719) 424-7522 or at [zoocamp@cmzoo.org](mailto:zoocamp@cmzoo.org).

## PARKING

Please park in appropriate parking spots when picking up or dropping off your campers. DO NOT block crosswalks or fire lanes. DO NOT park in designated handicap spaces unless authorized. Please use caution in parking lots as campers will be present along walkways.



# PACKING LIST

## PACKING LIST

### Clothing & Accessories:

Campers should dress comfortably and appropriately for the weather - WE WILL BE SPENDING AMPLE TIME OUTSIDE. Layers are encouraged, closed-toe walking shoes are required. A daypack and water bottle are also required! A spare set of clothes might also be useful, as campers may have the opportunity to participate in activities that get their clothes wet and/or dirty. Please replenish your camper's daypack daily. Remember to label EVERYTHING!

### Snacks & Lunches:

Cheyenne Mountain Zoo DOES NOT provide lunch! **Please send your child to camp with a lunch and two snacks.** Campers are very active at Zoo camp and therefore need plenty of protein-based food to stay healthy throughout the day. DO NOT send food that needs to be refrigerated or heated. Avoid sending perishable food unless precautions are taken. If you child has a food allergy, it must be indicated on their Camper Health History Form. Food may not be shared or traded at camp. Emergency contacts will be contacted if a child is missing either a lunch, snack, or water bottle. Parents are responsible for bringing any missing food or drink items to camp as soon as possible.

## LOST & FOUND

Cheyenne Mountain Zoo assumes no responsibility for lost or stolen items. Please label all belongings prior to camp. Lost items will be stored in the camp lost & found bin for up to 24 hours and then relinquished to the Zoo's main Lost & Found. You may contact the Zoo's main Lost & Found at (719) 633-9925.



# SAMPLE ITINERARY

Every day is an adventure at Zoo Camp!

Here is an example of what your camper may experience:

8:50am   Check-in
9:00am   Camper & Staff Intros
9:20am   Zoo Hike (Tour a Zoo Area)
10:00am   Morning Snack
10:30am   Animal Ambassador Encounter
11:00am   Themed Activity
12:00pm   Lunch
12:30pm   Zoo Hike (Tour a Zoo Area)
1:30pm   Animal Feeding
2:00pm   Afternoon Snack
2:30pm   Themed Activity
3:00pm   Wrap-Up and Final Game
3:30pm   Walk to Check-out



# GENERAL INFORMATION

## CAMP GROUPS

Campers will be divided into groups based on the grade level they will enter in the fall. Each grade level will be broken into an average of two groups. There will be no more than 12 campers per group.

Please email [zoocamp@cmzoo.org](mailto:zoocamp@cmzoo.org) at least two weeks prior to the camp date if your camper is interested in requesting placement in a group with a friend.

Camp Educator to Camper ratio is:

2:8      Kindergarten Full Day Camp

1:12     1st—8th Grade Camps

## ANIMAL INTERACTIONS

**Campers WILL NOT be interacting directly with large animals.**

Campers will have at least three opportunities to engage with a private animal ambassador presentation specifically designed for each camp group. Twice a week, campers will also have the opportunity to attend a large animal show with a special opportunity to speak with a Zookeeper or build enrichment for a larger animal.

## CAMP SPACES

### Indoor Spaces:

Lodge at Moose Lake and Safari Cabin are the two main spaces occupied by campers. Each building has its own set of restrooms specifically for camper use. Our Camp Educators and other adults do not utilize the same camp-designated restrooms. Campers' belongings will be stored in the building spaces throughout the day. Each building includes fire exits up to code, smoke detectors, first-aid stations, and planned emergency procedures.

### Outdoor Spaces:

Campers will have the opportunity to explore our entire Zoo along with our private nature trail exploration space. The nature trail serves as the perfect canvas for campers to creatively investigate local flora and fauna and is solely used by campers and teen program participants.



# SUN & HEAT SAFETY

## SUNSCREEN

In accordance to Colorado Licensure Standards, Cheyenne Mountain Zoo must ensure that all children apply sunscreen according to the product label while at Zoo Camp. Cheyenne Mountain Zoo will provide and allow campers to apply Rocky Mountain Sunscreen SPF 50. In order to maintain youth protection policies, Camp Staff will assist campers through verbal communication on proper sunscreen application. Camp Staff WILL NOT directly apply sunscreen to campers. If you prefer your camper to utilize their own sunscreen, please provide a sun protectant product labeled with your camper's first and last name.

## HYDRATION

Campers and staff are encouraged to drink plenty of water throughout the day. Water stations will be available, and campers will be reminded to stay hydrated.

## COOLING MEASURES

Campers will have access to shaded areas and indoor spaces to cool down. Cooling towels, fans, and other cooling measures may be available when necessary.

## ACTIVITY MODIFICATIONS

Outdoor activities may be modified, shortened, or moved to cooler times of the day when heat advisories are in effect.

## STAFF TRAINING

All camp staff will receive training on recognizing the signs of heat-related illnesses and responding appropriately. Staff will also be trained to monitor campers' well-being during hot weather.



# IMMUNIZATIONS

## IMMUNIZATIONS

**Required Vaccines:** Campers must be fully immunized according to the recommendations set forth by the Colorado Health Department to participate in camp. Campers and Camp Staff are required to be up-to-date on the following vaccines as per the recommended schedule by local health authorities.

- Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR)
- Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis (DTaP or Tdap)
- Polio (IPV)
- Hepatitis B
- Varicella (Chickenpox)
- Any other vaccines recommended by local health authorities

**Exemptions:** If a camper is NOT fully immunized, a completed Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment Immunization Certificate of Medical or Non-medical Exemption must be provided to Cheyenne Mountain Zoo at least two weeks prior to the camper's start date.

**Verification of Immunization:** Campers and Camp Staff are required to provide documentation of their immunization status, which includes proof of vaccination, two weeks prior to the start of camp via the Camp Health History Form. The documentation should include the date of vaccination and the signature or stamp of the healthcare provider.

**Enforcement:** Campers and Camp Staff who do not meet the immunization requirements or provide valid medical exemptions will not be allowed to participate in Zoo Camp

**Exclusion in Case of Outbreak:** In the event of a vaccine-preventable disease outbreak within the camp community, unvaccinated or under-vaccinated individuals may be excluded from camp activities in consultation with local health authorities until it is safe for them to return.

**Confidentiality:** All immunization records and related health information will be treated with strict confidentiality. All records will only be accessible to authorized camp staff for verification purposes and shared on mandated state portals.



# MEDICATION & HEALTHCARE

## CAMP HEALTHCARE CONSULTANT/EMERGENCY SERVICES

Cheyenne Mountain Zoo works weekly with a licensed and registered nurse, as our Camp Healthcare Consultant, who is a medical professional who assists our camp in meeting and exceeding health, safety and wellness standards. For more information about our Camp Health Consultant, please reach out to [zoocamp@cmzoo.org](mailto:zoocamp@cmzoo.org).

An experienced first responder is available for any and all emergencies located throughout Zoo grounds. Zoo Camp also has the camp healthcare consultant on call at all times. All Camp Staff are CPR/First Aid certified and have completed all of the state required trainings to be a day camp educator.

## MEDICATION

A Medication Administration Form must be completed at least two weeks prior to the start of camp by a parent or guardian in order for medication to be administered at camp. Medication must be brought to staff in its original prescription labeled container. All medication must be given to the camp Medication Administrator, who has been trained and delegated by the Camp Healthcare Consultant to administer medications, during camp check-in. Any camper self-carrying medication must submit a self-carry contract. All medication is stored in an area inaccessible to campers, but available to staff trained in administering medications.

## COMMUNICATING MEDICAL INFORMATION

Contact us directly with any concerns or comments about your camper's unique needs. Every guardian will have the opportunity to connect with Camp Educators at check-in every day to deliver any camper-specific information. Please feel free to contact us with specific requests through email at [zoocamp@cmzoo.org](mailto:zoocamp@cmzoo.org) or by phone at (719) 424-7522.



# SPECIALIZED NEEDS

## CAMPERS WITH SPECIALIZED NEEDS

**Inclusivity and Nondiscrimination:** Cheyenne Mountain Zoo is committed to providing an inclusive and nondiscriminatory camp environment. We welcome campers of all abilities and will make reasonable accommodations to ensure their full participation and enjoyment of camp activities. We will make a reasonable effort to accommodate all campers without fundamentally altering our camp program. We maintain our Camp Mentor to camper ratios at all times and are unable to provide personalized one-on-one care for campers with special needs.

The Cheyenne Mountain Zoo's Youth Protection Policy requires all adults interacting and sharing space with campers to be a Zoo employee or Zoo volunteer who has been background checked, screened, trained in youth protection and drug tested through our Human Resources department OR a nurse/educator who is licensed through the state of Colorado and can provide their current licensure status. Therefore, we do not allow parents, guardians, or caregivers to attend camp with their camper unless the adult is a nurse/educator licensed through the State of Colorado.

Caregivers of campers with special needs are encouraged to communicate with Camp Staff during the registration process to discuss their camper's specific needs and any necessary accommodations.

It is essential for caregivers to provide accurate and detailed information about their camper's special needs, including any medical conditions, allergies, behavioral considerations, or accommodations required.



# SPECIALIZED NEEDS

## CAMPERS WITH SPECIALIZED NEEDS

**Individualized Accommodation Plans:** Cheyenne Mountain Zoo is committed to developing individualized accommodation plans (IAPs) for campers with special needs. These plans will be created in collaboration with caregivers to address the unique needs of each camper.

IAPs may include modifications to camp activities, communication plans, or any other accommodations necessary to ensure the camper's safety and enjoyment. All campers will have access to sensory corners equipped with independent activities. All campers will also receive somewhat consistent routines, displayed visual schedules, warning for transitions and changes, individualized communication and clear/consistent expectations.

Additional information can be provided and discussed by contacting camp staff at (719) 424-7522 or email camp staff at [zoocamp@cmzoo.org](mailto:zoocamp@cmzoo.org).

**Qualified Staff and Training:** Cheyenne Mountain Zoo will strive to have qualified Camp Staff trained in working with campers with special needs. These Camp Staff members will receive training on inclusive practices, communication strategies, and any specific accommodations outlined in a camper's IAP.

Camp Staff will work closely with caregivers to ensure that accommodations are effectively implemented and regularly reviewed.

**Confidentiality:** All information provided by caregivers about a camper's special needs will be treated with strict confidentiality and shared only with individuals directly involved in the camper's care and safety.

**Continuous Communication:** Cheyenne Mountain Zoo encourages open and continuous communication between Camp Staff and parents or guardians of campers with special needs. Regular updates and check-ins will be facilitated to ensure that the camper's needs are being met.



# ILLNESS & INJURY

## ILLNESS

If a camper becomes sick at Zoo Camp, a parent/guardian will be contacted immediately. The camper will then be isolated in the designated camp quarantine area with a representative of camp leadership. Camp staff reserve the right to remove a camper from Zoo Camp due to illness or appeared illness. A parent/guardian is required to pick-up a camper within one hour of being contacted by Camp Staff. If this policy is violated in any way then the camper will be dismissed from camp. Parents should refer to the [How Sick Is Too Sick](#) recommendations by CDPHE to determine whether campers are too sick to attend camp or return to camp.

When campers have been diagnosed with a reportable communicable illness, Camp Staff must notify the El Paso County Public Health Department, all camp staff members, and all parents/guardians of campers in our care. The camper's confidentiality will be maintained through all avenues of communication. Camp leadership requests parents/guardians to report their camper's exposure to a child with a communicable illness outside of Zoo property and at the discretion of Camp Leadership the camper will be excluded from camp for the period of time that fits accordingly.

## INJURIES/ACCIDENTS

Injuries will be treated by either Camp Staff or Zoo First Responder, as needed. Parents/Guardians will be notified of any minor injuries treated by a band aid or ice pack through an "Ouch Report" provided by Camp Staff . Parents/guardians will be contacted immediately in the case of any serious injury. If a parent/guardian cannot be immediately reached, Camp Staff will contact the camper's next designated emergency contact. In the case of a serious injury, 911 will be called and the city of Colorado Springs first responders will advise accordingly. Camp Staff will remain with any injured camper until a parent/guardian is available to transfer care.



# ATTENDANCE

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

**Notification of Absence:** In the event that a camper cannot attend camp, caregivers are required to notify camp staff as soon as possible. This notification should be provided through the designated channels, which may include a phone call to (719) 424-7522 or an email to [zoocamp@cmzoo.org](mailto:zoocamp@cmzoo.org).

**Sick Campers:** Campers who are ill should not attend camp to prevent the spread of illness to others. If a camper exhibits symptoms of illness (e.g., fever, vomiting, contagious diseases), they should not attend camp until they have fully recovered and are no longer contagious. Caregivers should notify Camp Staff about the illness and the expected duration of the absence.

**Medical Documentation:** Campers who miss camp due to illness may be required to provide a note from a healthcare provider indicating that they are no longer contagious and are medically cleared to return to camp.

**No Refunds for Absences:** Cheyenne Mountain Zoo Camp does not provide refunds or prorated fees for camp days missed due to absences, including illness or other excused reasons.



# ATTENDANCE (CONT.)

## LATE ARRIVALS & EARLY PICK-UPS

**Late Arrival Notification:** Caregivers are encouraged to notify Camp Staff in advance if their camper will be arriving late due to unforeseen circumstances. This helps us plan accordingly and ensures a smooth transition for the late camper. Late arrivals should check in at the front admission gates. Zoo Staff will inform Camp Staff of the late arrival.

**Early Pickup Notification:** If a caregiver needs to pick up their camper from camp before the official end time, they should provide advance notice to Camp Staff whenever possible. This allows us to prepare for the camper's departure and ensures a smooth transition. Caregivers should check-in at the front admission gates for assistance.

**Identification:** Caregivers picking up campers early will be required to show identification and sign the camper out. Only individuals listed as authorized for pickup on the camper's registration form and roster will be allowed to pick up the camper.

**Emergency Early Pickup:** In the event of an emergency, caregivers may contact the EdVenture offices directly at (719) 424-7827 or (719) 424-7522 to arrange for an early pickup. Please leave a voice message and we will do our best to quickly return your call. Emergency early pickups will be facilitated promptly, with the camper's safety and well-being as the top priority.



# WEATHER & EMERGENCIES

## RAINY WEATHER POLICY/UNFAVORABLE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

The primary objective of this policy is to provide a safe and engaging experience for campers, even when inclement weather conditions or unfavorable outdoor conditions prevent us from conducting outdoor activities as planned. The safety and well-being of campers and staff are our top priorities. We will always err on the side of caution and make decisions with the best interests of campers in mind.

### RAINY DAY

**Light Rain:** In the case of light rain or drizzle, camp activities may continue outdoors as scheduled. Campers should come prepared for rainy weather with appropriate rain gear: including raincoats, umbrellas, and proper footwear. It's essential that campers are dressed comfortably and appropriately for the weather conditions.

**Heavy Rain:** When heavy rain or thunderstorms are expected, camp activities may be modified or moved indoors to ensure the safety of campers and staff. The decision to modify or cancel outdoor activities will be made by camp leadership.

In the event of heavy rain or thunderstorms, campers will be engaged in indoor activities that are both fun and educational. These activities may include:

- Animal-related presentations or demonstrations in indoor facilities.
- Arts and crafts.
- Educational group games
- Age-appropriate movies with animals and nature.
- Storytelling or interactive discussions about animals and their habitats.



# WEATHER & EMERGENCIES

## EXTREME HEAT

**Heat Watch:** When a heat watch is issued, camp staff will be alerted, and precautions will be taken to ensure campers are well-hydrated and protected from the sun.

**Heat Warning:** In the event of a heat warning, outdoor activities will be modified or suspended to reduce the risk of heat-related illnesses. Campers will be provided with additional breaks and access to shade.

**Excessive Heat Warning:** During an excessive heat warning, outdoor activities may be canceled, and campers will be engaged in indoor or shaded activities. Special attention will be given to hydration, and campers will be encouraged to drink water regularly.

## EMERGENCIES/NATURAL DISASTERS

In the event of an emergency or natural disaster, Cheyenne Mountain Zoo has extensive preparedness protocols. In the event that a natural disaster or emergency occurs on ground, Summer Camp staff will closely adhere to those protocols. Our goal is to keep all campers, staff and Zoo guests calm and safe at all times. Parent/guardians will be contacted immediately with further instructions/communication on camper safety and retrieval in the event of an emergency.





Cheyenne Mountain Zoo EdVenture Department  
Zoo Camp

(719) 424-7522 | [zoocamp@cmzoo.org](mailto:zoocamp@cmzoo.org)

**Business Hours:**

9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday

*If we are unable to answer your call, please leave a voice message and we will return your call as soon as possible.*

