

Guidelines for the Utilization of Volunteers in Zoo Management in India

OBJECTIVES:

The purpose of the Zoo Volunteer programme is to render services to zoo in a voluntary manner for the purpose of assisting the management in its day to day function. The volunteer can participate in reception work/visitor management, zoo education programmes, maintenance work of the zoo and animal care and health management. Volunteers benefit by enriching their own experience and learning, while providing quality service to the zoo, which are short of adequate trained or qualified manpower.

VOLUNTEER WORK AREAS:

1. Manning the visitor information desk

Along with regular information centre staff, volunteer will act as an information resource for guests by providing directions, answering questions, and aiding in complaint resolution at the entrance and key positions throughout the Zoo. Assisting with administrative office functions for some specified areas relating to visitor control and management

2. Zoo education and awareness programme

The zoos most important mandate is Nature education and awareness. In order to assist in this work a volunteer requires an education training program. Those volunteers who can spare more time and are dedicated, should be encouraged for this activity. The zoo education staff will give specific training for this work. Information on Zoo mission, purpose, vision, goals and values and animal collection will be given, which will be then shared with general public around the Zoo. Other work involves aiding in the efficient entrance of school groups on days of high group attendance e.g. educational tours for students inside the animal exhibit area or guiding through interpretation center. A volunteer can also be engaged in providing running commentary on different biological aspects in a safari vehicle.

3. Gift Shop

Help in the gift shop with assisting customers and perform basic retail procedures.

4. Zoo maintenance work

There will be assignments that will come up randomly throughout the year

and will involve in Zoo animal enclosure area and public utility area cleaning, landscaping, sign boards' designing, etc

5. Children Playground Attendant

The playgrounds where the children play need assistance of supervisor and those who would like to help and entertain young children and take care of their safety can work here.

6. Special Events Volunteer

Help with annual/periodical/occasional events like Essay, painting and elocution competition and organisation of other special events organised by the zoo.

7. Substitute

Volunteer will be on call to come in when a need arises such as in situation where another volunteer is unable to make their scheduled time. Be trained in the numerous areas so that they can fill in or substitute when required.

8. Tour Guide

He/she will take groups around the premises and explain and interpret nature of the animal and exhibits to the visitor. This requires an outgoing, enthusiastic and dedicated individual.

9. Volunteer Management Team

Volunteers who have demonstrated a commitment to the Zoo may be asked to accept greater responsibility at the discretion of the Volunteer Coordinator.

10. Grounds Keepers

Assist Zoo Staff in improving and maintaining Zoo grounds and other outdoor projects throughout the year.

11. Animal Feed store

Assist in preparing the feed for supply to animals

12. Animal Healthcare

Assist in providing Veterinary care if you are a veterinarian or a trained paramedic (vet).

RECRUITMENT:

New Volunteers will be recruited through advertising in zoo website, print and electronic media. Those who have completed secondary school examination shall be eligible to act as volunteer. Those volunteering for specialised jobs requiring higher or specialised qualification should at least hold minimum qualification in that field. Test and Personal Interviews shall be conducted to select the volunteers. Prospective Volunteers will be required to complete an orientation process and complete an application form (**Annexure I**). An ID shall be issued to all volunteer.

1. Requirements

Applicants to the programme must be 18 years of age or older. An enthusiastic, friendly and positive attitude and the ability to work well with a diverse audience and under diverse and adverse condition is also required. All applicants must be cleared by a background check before they begin training.

2. Training

The Zoo Education Department shall be responsible for the orientation training of all Volunteers. Training sessions for new Volunteers shall be offered at least twice a year, the scheduling and content of which shall be planned by the Education wing. Continuing Education and Membership workshops and special sessions shall be held throughout the year. Workshops will be arranged by the Volunteer Education Committee. Social activities suited to the needs and interests of the Volunteers shall be planned throughout the year. In case of need, volunteer may be sent to the zoos/facilities in the same or other city for orientation to provide best exposure.

3. Time Commitment

Volunteers must work based on time commitment schedule, decided in consultation with volunteer and zoo volunteer programme co-ordinator.

Benefit to Volunteer

1. Special Awards Certificate of Participation

A zoo volunteer who has rendered service of at least 30 days during a period of one year will be granted a Certificate of Participation.

A Zoo Volunteer who has been active for two (2) or more consecutive years, and who has contributed exemplary and exceptional service to the Zoo,

may be granted special award. A committee shall be constituted to award certificate/recognition to eligible volunteers

2. Payment to Volunteers

Volunteering is an opportunity for people to give their time, energy and skills. Volunteers are entitled to out-of-pocket expenses for their volunteering activities. Where someone incurs expenses as a direct result of their volunteering activities they should be reimbursed. Out of pocket expenses for volunteers may include:

- travelling expenses to and from where they are working as a volunteer
- other subsistence costs – e.g. food and drink
- any special clothing and/or tools
- training

Organisations should ensure that they do not pay volunteers expenses at a flat rate, regardless of the actual expenses incurred; as this greatly increases the chance that the relationship will fall within the scope of regular employment. Payment of out-of-pocket expenses to a reasonable level is legitimate. Organisations should:

- produce detailed guidelines on expenses
- provide all volunteers with information about claiming out-of-pocket expenses
- provide budget for volunteers' expenses

3. Volunteer Out of pocket expenses

Amount of volunteer fees that a zoo should provide is limited to the prevailing schedule of rates for unskilled worker and travel cost from place of residence to the zoo by public transport. If food/meals are given to the volunteer its actual cost may be deducted from the out of pocket expenses.

Zoo may also opt some other suitable staff welfare scheme for the volunteer as well to encourage and boost their confidence in taking up assignments in the zoo. The volunteer must sign the Statement of Confidentiality and Organizational Ethics (**Annexure II**).

Selection/ re-engagement criteria:

Recruiting or re-engagement of any applicant or existing volunteer should not

be a matter of right if he/she is otherwise eligible. The zoo management shall reserve the right to accept any one or reject any application without assigning any reason for the same considering the sensitive nature of a volunteer's work and damage that can be caused by a undesirable applicant as he/she get access to all parts of the zoo and animals. Every effort should be made to see that the applicant posses right aptitude for such a job.

ZOO VOLUNTEER ETHICS NORMS AND CODE OF CONDUCT

The details on volunteer ethics and code of conduct have been elaborated in the **Annexure III**.

WARNING OF RISK

Despite being careful and proper preparation, instruction, medical advice, conditioning and equipment, there is still a risk of serious injury when providing volunteer services. Understandably, not all hazards and dangers can be foreseen. Volunteers must understand that depending upon the volunteer services, certain risks, dangers and injuries due to accidents, inclement weather, slip and falls, inadequate or defective equipment, failure in supervision or instruction, premises defects, horseplay, carelessness, lack of skill or technique, and all other circumstances inherent to the particular volunteer services exist. In this regard, it must be recognized that it is impossible for the Zoo to guarantee absolute safety.

WAIVER AND RELEASE OF ALL CLAIMS AND ASSUMPTION OF RISK

Those providing volunteer services will be expressly assuming the risk and legal liability and waiving and releasing all claims for injuries, damages or loss which they may sustain as a result of participating in any and all activities connected with and associated with volunteer services (including transportation services/vehicle operations, when provided). The volunteer will sign a waiver form to relinquish all claims (**Annexure IV**)

VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM

- Name:
- Father's Name:
- Date of Birth:
- Nationality:
- Address:
- City:
- Home Phone & E-mail:
- Cell Phone & Work Phone:
- Areas of Interest:
- Hours of service willing to render (Indicate days and month):
- Languages Spoken:
- Fluency in languages:
- Previous experience of voluntary service (NSS, NCC, NGO etc)

Background Information

Have you ever been convicted of a crime other than minor traffic violations?
Yes/No

- Offence Date
- Location Fine/sentence
- Are you currently on probation, parole, or awaiting trial?

Your application is subject to a complete background review including any criminal convictions.

Emergency Information (required):

- Name:
- Relationship:
- Home Phone: ()
- Mobile Phone: ()

- **ALLERGIC REACTIONS IF ANY**

The information in this application is true and complete, and I have not knowingly withheld any information. I understand that misrepresentation may be cause for dismissal. I authorize verification of all information contained in this application. I understand that as a volunteer at the Zoo I will be expected to demonstrate a commitment to uphold the mission of the organization, to maintain an environment of integrity for people and for animals, and to focus on customer service, with respect for all employees, volunteers and guests. As a volunteer at the zoo, I agree to follow all zoo guidelines and policies. In addition, I give consent to the Zoo to emergency medical attention in the event that I am not able to give consent, and if my emergency contacts are not available. I am aware that Zoo has the right to release me from service at any time, just as I have the right to withdraw from volunteer service at any time.

Volunteer Signature

Date

Note:

Please attach resume and certificate of voluntary service in any organisation

STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL ETHICS FORM

I understand that all volunteers must hold Zoo information in strict confidence. This obligation of confidentiality must extend to the following areas of concern:

- Copyrighted materials and programs developed and used by the Zoo
- Personnel information
- Donation data base
- Financial or operational data
- Any sensitive animal information including escape situations
- Research project information

(Under no circumstances the volunteer shall discuss the above information with anyone, especially the media unless authorized to do so)

I agree that the above material is the property of the Zoo. I understand that the Director and his/her representative shall be the official spokesperson for the organization. I will neither disclose any information or materials to any persons who are not employees of the Zoo nor will I copy or remove the same from the premises of the zoo.

Volunteers shall follow a code of ethics that follows these guidelines:

- Volunteers shall conduct themselves at all times in a professional manner
- Volunteer are not to capitalize on their relationship with Zoo to further their personal or professional goals or gains, including areas of conflict of interest. These situations include but are not limited to promoting personal business opportunities.

I further understand that violation of any matters listed above may be grounds for dismissal.

I also certify that the information provided on this application is true and complete. False statements on this application shall be considered as grounds for termination. I also understand that this is not a paid position.

Signed _____

Date _____

ZOO VOLUNTEER ETHICS NORMS AND CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Dress Code

Since a volunteer is representing the Zoo, it is important that volunteer should dress appropriately for zoo activity. It is necessary to wear shoes and protective clothing whenever required and non revealing clothing.

2. Identification

Volunteer must wear photo ID provided.

3. Customer Service Standards

Being a Volunteer at Zoo means working with the public. Customer service is vital to the success of the visitor's experience and should be considered as number one priority. If a visitor approaches a volunteer, he/she should always greet them with a smile and offer assistance. If one cannot answer a particular question from a visitor he/she should find someone who can or direct them to the Reception officer at the front entrance. A volunteer should never ignore or be disrespectful to zoo guests.

4. Conduct

Zoo's Volunteer Program is highly regarded by staff and Volunteers alike and has a reputation for excellence. As a Volunteer staff member, a Volunteer's actions represent the Zoo and the Volunteer Program as a whole. Use of inappropriate language, drugs or alcohol, and fighting are all grounds for dismissal from the program. Any disputes or problems should be handled in a calm manner and should be reported to service or staff supervisor and the Volunteer Coordinator immediately.

Volunteers are important role models and often the most visible representatives of the Zoo. Guests learn a lot from their attitude, comments, and behaviour. It is expected that volunteer will behave in a manner that is appropriate to ones' Volunteer position at the Zoo.

The Zoo should be confident in professional abilities of all staff both paid and Volunteer. Everyone is expected to follow the same basic common sense rules of conduct that will protect the interests and safety of visitors, animals,

and organization. Certain actions and forms of behavior will not be tolerated and may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal. A determination of appropriate action will take into consideration the circumstances surrounding the incident and the Volunteer's overall record.

Disciplinary Policy

Verbal Warning:

Any complaint from a service area supervisor or other Zoo staff member will result in a meeting with the Volunteer Coordinator and verbal warning filed in the individual's file.

Written Warning

A second infraction will result in suspension from the program for a period of time to be determined by the Volunteer Coordinator and Education Curator. A written warning will be filed in the individual's program file.

Dismissal

A third infraction will result in dismissal from the program.

Dissatisfied Customers

Occasions arise when a visitor is harsh, discourteous, speaks in raised voice and abusive, volunteer should remain calm and handle the situation without being disturbed or agitated.

- Volunteer should take a deep breath, remember that the visitor is upset and deserves your attention
- He/she must listen to visitors patiently
- To the visitor, a problem is important even if it doesn't seem so to a volunteer.
- Problems with food products sold in the restaurant or kiosk can be directed to the restaurant staff.
- Problems with animal exhibits and visibility of animals should be explained
- Problem with zoo infrastructure and facility the volunteer may direct them to the executing staff

Lost Person Protocol

In the case of a child that is lost, please find the nearest staff member with a

wireless to initiate the search protocols. Please be aware that there is also a wireless at the entrance and office. It is important to stay in the area where the child/parent was last seen. Do NOT walk around the zoo with the child/parent looking for the lost person. The staff will look in the park and direct help to your location.

Unruly Guests

These persons could be rude to a volunteer or other visitors, feeding the animals, or doing things in the zoo that are not allowed (climbing over exhibit fences, harassing animals, etc.).

- This may be reported to the supervisor or another zoo staff/ personnel.
- If they are not available, it should be told to the receptionist or ticket booth staff. Zoo staff are the best people to deal with this type of situation.
- Unless a person or animal is in immediate danger, such miscreants should not be “reprimanded”.

Volunteering Around Children

When assisting with zoo classes or in any other areas of the Zoo, the following standards must be maintained at all times:

- When working with children in a classroom situation, a volunteer should always keep his/her voice calm. Never raise voice to a child.
- In a classroom situation, the Zoo staff person is the only disciplinarian unless a parent is present. A volunteer should not attempt to discipline a child at any time, either verbally or physically.
- The role of a volunteer is to support Zoo staff and to ensure a fun, safe atmosphere for the children.
- Do not touch a child under any circumstances for any reason.
- If a volunteer is on Zoo grounds and witness a child doing something which is not allowed (climbing over exhibit fences, harassing animals, etc.), He/she should tell the parent that the child's actions are not permitted within the zoo. If the behavior persists, a senior staff/ personnel should be told.

Zoonosis

Volunteers that handle animals do run the risk of acquiring/transmitting zoonotic diseases. Zoonotic diseases are those which are shared by man and

animals. All Volunteers that handle animals should adhere to the following procedures.

Volunteers that work in the animal care areas must produce a negative TB test annually. TB test results should be kept on file in the Volunteer office. Frequent hand washing and disinfecting of the environment is recommended as a way to prevent the transmission of zoonotic diseases.

Media

The Zoo Management must approve all media communications including, interview and/or article requests. If a volunteer is contacted by local media for an interview regarding Zoo, he/she notify the Volunteer Coordinator. If approached by a media representative while on zoo grounds, he/she should refrain from answering any questions or sharing his/her opinions on a zoo matter, unless it has been previously approved by a representative of the zoo management. Media requesting information from a volunteer should be directed to Reception at the entrance. Any unauthorized interview or attempt to contact a member of the media regarding any zoo business made by a Volunteer will result in immediate disciplinary action, not limited to but including dismissal from the Volunteer program.

Daily Work Routine

Sign-in/Out Procedures

Volunteers will report before the Education/volunteer coordinator/Reception officer

1. Upon Arrival

Volunteer will enter name, date, service area worked, and total hours worked on the Volunteer Hours book/ time sheets located in the Volunteer coordinator's office/ Reception office. Volunteer should sign-in on arrival and sign-out when leaving. From these time sheets, staff can compile monthly records of all Volunteer service areas. Signing in when volunteer arrives at the zoo enables the staff to locate him/her in the event of an emergency.

The volunteer should check bulletin board for updates/new information and then go to assigned work area.

2. Before Departing

Volunteer should check the schedule for any changes.

3. Protocols in case of illness or inability to work

In the event when a volunteer cannot come to work scheduled for him/her it should be informed to the Education/Reception officer

Disclaimer on risk and injury to volunteer

The volunteer programs and activities in a zoo are organized in a safe manner and zoo holds the safety of volunteers as of extreme importance. The Zoo should continually strive to reduce such risks and ensure all volunteers follow safety rules and instructions that are designed to protect the volunteer's safety. However, volunteers must recognize that there is an inherent risk of injury when choosing to volunteer for any activity or programme. Additionally, each volunteer is solely responsible for determining if he/she is physically fit and/or properly skilled for any volunteer activity. It is always advisable, especially if the volunteer is disabled in any way or recently suffered an illness, injury or impairment, to consult a physician before undertaking any physical activity.

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Annexure IV

FORM OF WAIVER AND RELEASE OF ALL CLAIMS AND ASSUMPTION OF RISK

I Mr/Ms (Name) have on my own will agreed to work as a volunteer in the (Name of Zoo) and recognize and acknowledge that there are certain risks of physical injury to volunteers in this programme/activity, and I voluntarily agree to assume the full risk of any and all injuries, damages or loss, regardless of severity, that I may sustain as a result of my volunteer services. I further agree to waive and relinquish all claims I may have (or accrue to me) as a result of my volunteer services against the zoo, including its officers, officials, agents, volunteers and employees.

I do hereby fully release and forever discharge the Parties ['zoo?'] from any and all claims for injuries, damages, or loss that I may have or which may accrue to me and arising out of, connected with or in any way associated with my volunteer services. I have read and fully understood the above important information, warning of risk, assumption of risk and waiver and release of all claims.

Signature, name and address of volunteer

Signature, name and address of witness 1

Signature, name and address of witness 2