

## **2026 Zoo Crew Lead Camp Mentor Position Description**

### **GENERAL SUMMARY**

The Lead Camp Mentor is an unpaid leadership position in support of the overall Zoo Crew Program, in which you will be responsible for helping support Zoo Crew within their roles in Camp Zoofari, an immersive, hands-on learning experience for children ages 6-12. Camp programs will be based on topics relating to natural sciences (zoology, ecology, conservation and animal husbandry) with the purpose of igniting a passion for learning, conservation, and an understanding of the natural world in order to cultivate the next generation of conservation heroes.

The Lead Camp Mentor will have the opportunity to strengthen their teaching and mentoring abilities while building leadership skills through active participation on our Leadership Council. They will also help shape the future of the Zoo Crew program by providing valuable feedback and insights. This role requires high energy, enthusiasm, creativity, and flexibility, as well as the ability to work effectively with groups of all ages in both indoor and outdoor settings.

### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Zoo Crew Lead Camp Mentor is a leadership position within the Zoo Crew program. Responsibilities include:

- Serving as a member of the leadership council and participating in meetings and activities throughout the year to prepare for the summer program
- Introducing Zoo Crew and Camp Guides at the beginning of the week, making sure everyone knows who and where to meet
- Lead daily morning and afternoon meetings with Camp Mentors
- Communicating with both Camp Guides and Zoo Crew Camp Mentors to make sure they are properly preparing for the Zoo Crew to facilitate an activity by the end of the week
- Observing and providing constructive feedback to Camp Mentors and Camp Guides to improve conservation education skills
- Distributing and collecting of all Camp Mentor feedback forms
- Identify opportunities for improvement within the Camp Mentor role and communicate this to Camp Supervisor
- Supporting Camp Mentors during camper lunches to encourage Zoo Crew-Camper engagement
- Facilitating goal setting and shoutouts with Camp Mentors
- Helping implement and track wildlife-saving efforts within Camp Zoofari including facilitating compost and TerraCycle collection.
- Develop a wildlife-saving project that engages and inspires campers to help save wildlife
- May be asked to act as a fill-in in other Zoo Crew sections as needed
- Will act as a go-to if questions arise for first-year Zoo Crew

### **SCHEDULE**

#### **Spring 2026 (Pre-Summer Planning)**

These meetings are mandatory training to prepare for your role in the summer. The meetings are also an opportunity for the Teen Leadership Council to get to know each other and your session partners.

##### **Mandatory Meeting Dates:**

- Sunday, March 1, 2026: 9am-4pm
- Saturday, April 11, 2026: 9am-4pm
- Sunday, May 3, 2026: 9am-4pm

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### Summer 2026

The schedule is approximate and can change at any time between now and the start of the program. It is only meant to provide applicants with an idea of what to expect going into this position. There will be several small duties that are not included in the following outline. This schedule is consecutive beginning on June 2-July 4 or July 7-August 8.

- **Daily Tasks**
  - Taking attendance of all Zoo Crew participating as a Camp Mentor
  - Lead morning meetings and teambuilding activities for Camp Mentors
  - Facilitate debrief meetings and provide feedback throughout the week
  - Mentor Zoo Crew Camp Mentors interpretation and storytelling best practices.
  - Facilitate Lead Camp Mentor activities
- **Weekly Tasks**
  - **Week 1:** Meet Camp Guides and Camp Staff; Become familiar with Camp schedule; Develop wildlife-saving project to facilitate with campers in coming weeks
  - **Week 2:** Camp Training with Explorers
  - **Week 3:** Evaluate and make necessary changes to wildlife-saving project
  - **Week 4:** Camp Training with Explorers
  - **Week 5:** Assist Camp Leadership Staff with preparation of second half of summer Camp Zoofari programming (Session 1) or assist Camp Leadership Staff with preparation for All Access Camp or clean-up of summer Camp Zoofari programming (Session 2)

### Year-Round Zoo Crew

After the summer, Teen Leadership Council will have monthly **mandatory** meetings in the Fall and Spring. At these meetings TLC will be debriefing from the summer, planning for future events such as World Lemur Festival, and discussing future Zoo Crew projects.

#### Tentative Fall 2026 meeting schedule:

- September 12, 2026: 9am-4pm
- October 11, 2026: 9am-4pm
- November 8, 2026: 9am-4pm
- December 12, 2026: 9am-4pm

Beyond the monthly meetings, TLC members are expected to participate in Year-Round Zoo Crew events, either in a leadership capacity or as Zoo Crew. The minimum requirements are:

#### **Fall (October – January)**

- Three shifts of Naturalist or Camp Mentor

#### **Spring (January – May)**

- Three shifts of Naturalist

### QUALIFICATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

- Have one year of Zoo Crew completed
- Be in good standing in the Zoo Crew program
- Be 15 years old by May 31, 2026
- Be between the ages of 15 and 17 *through* the end of your summer session

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- Be able and committed to attend **3 mandatory training meetings** in the Spring 2026
- Be able to commit to **ALL 5 weeks** of one of the Zoo Crew Explorers sessions in the Summer 2026
- Be able to continue through the Year-Round Zoo Crew program and attend monthly meetings in the Fall 2026/Spring 2027

### PREFERRED SKILLS

- A high level of energy and enthusiasm, creativity, flexibility, and the ability to work with groups of all ages in both in and outdoor settings.
- Ability to lead large groups of kids of multiple ages
- Flexibility with day-to-day routines
- A high level of honesty
- Works well with Zoo Crew and Zoo Staff, regardless of personality, age difference, etc.

### TO APPLY

Submit application by **Saturday, January 17<sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm.** Interviews will occur between January 31<sup>st</sup>-February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2026. Applicants will be chosen based on their application, interview, and previous evaluations.

### PARENTAL/GUARDIAN AGREEMENT

Being part of the Teen Leadership Council is a significant commitment. We want to ensure that all TLC members and their parents/guardians understand and agree to commit to all required meetings/participation dates as outlined above.

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### FAQ

#### Can I participate in more than five weeks of TLC or Zoo Crew?

TLC members are scheduled for one five-week session. You may participate in additional weeks only if you are serving as a Naturalist, Camp Mentor, or Junior Zookeeper. In some cases, Teen Programs Staff may invite you to assist with Zoo Crew activities or allow you to work on a designated project or committee (e.g., the Bird or Snake Saving Campaign). To prevent burnout, total participation is limited to a maximum of eight weeks during the summer.

#### What if I can't attend a Spring mandatory meeting?

Spring training meetings are required, as they prepare you for the summer program and cover essential information and skills. Please make every effort to adjust your schedule so you can attend. Spring training dates are listed above.

If you are unable to attend a mandatory meeting, please notify Teen Programs Staff as soon as possible. We understand that emergencies or special circumstances may arise and appreciate your timely communication. The best way to reach us is by email at [teenprograms@houstonzoo.org](mailto:teenprograms@houstonzoo.org).

#### What is the attendance expectation for monthly meetings?

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TLC is a collaborative leadership program, and every member's presence helps the group succeed. Members are expected to attend monthly meetings as regular participation is key to leadership growth and teamwork. While we understand that occasional conflicts may happen, members should aim to attend at least 75% of meetings to remain in good standing. Members who consistently miss meetings may be asked to meet with Teen Programs Staff to discuss their commitment to the program.