



Education Volunteer Programs

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. **What happened to the Docent and Discovery Guide Programs that had been offered previously?**

Volunteer programs must constantly change and evolve in order to be effective programs for the organization and to meet the needs and interests of its volunteers. What we called the Docent and Discovery Guide programs in the past have developed into multiple volunteer opportunities that provide individuals with various options to serve as a volunteer. We hope these new volunteer roles will continue to grow our team of passionate individuals who care deeply about wildlife conservation.

2. **What are the new volunteer roles?**

Play Partners, Education Assistants, WCS Now Interpreters Levels 1 and 2, and Special Events Support Volunteers are the new volunteer opportunities under the Education Volunteer Program. Each role and its responsibilities were based on tasks formally under the Docent and Discovery Guide Programs.

3. **Who can apply to the Education Volunteer Programs?**

Anyone one who is interested in conservation, wildlife, and protecting our natural resources through education is encouraged to apply to one of the opportunities with our Education Volunteer Program. The programs both seek individuals who are enthusiastic, team players who can also work independently, can work with all age groups (aged 0 to 100) and can work both in- and out- of doors.

Education Volunteers have the potential to have a meaningful and positive impact on the guest experience and further the mission of the Wildlife Conservation Society. Applicants to the volunteer program must be at least 15 years of age or older. The opportunities available through our Education Volunteer Program can be a rewarding experience for high school, college and graduate students, working and retired adults, and seniors.

4. **Are the opportunities offered with the Education Volunteer Program only for teens?**

Not at all! The opportunities available through our Education Volunteer Program can be a rewarding experience for college and graduate students, working and retired adults, and seniors. We strongly encourage adults to apply to our programs.

5. **Are any of the opportunities within the Education Volunteer Program paid internships?**

The opportunities offered with the Education Volunteer Program are all *unpaid* volunteer programs. The Education Volunteer Program does not offer paid or unpaid internships to teens or college students. Transportation expenses and meals are provided by the volunteer. The Education Volunteer Program does not offer or provide assistance with lodging.

6. **I need community service credit for school. Can I satisfy my school requirements through one of the opportunities within the Education Volunteer Program?**

The opportunities available within the Education Volunteer Program are first and foremost volunteer programs whose goal is to further the mission of the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) to “save wildlife and wild places worldwide through science, conservation action, education, and inspiring people to value nature”. Participants serving in one of the Education Volunteer Programs roles help WCS achieve this mission by engaging with aquarium guests at our exhibits.

While volunteers may request statement of hours served letters from the Coordinator of Volunteers for school, it should be noted by the applicant that he/she must be sure to complete the minimum service and enrichment hours expectations associated with the specific volunteer role the participant has chosen before any such statement can be written. The responsibility of completing these hours by their school’s deadline rests solely on the volunteer. The Education Volunteer Office will not write any statement of hours letters or fill out school hour forms until the volunteer has satisfactorily met their commitment to the Education Volunteer Program regardless of school deadlines.

7. I am 14 years old, but I am turning 15 after the application deadline. Can I submit the application for the Discovery Guides if I am not yet 15 years old?

You must be 15 years old at the time you submit the application to be considered for the any of opportunities offered with the Education Volunteer Program. On page six of the application, which requires both your signature and the signature of your parent (if you are under the age of 18 years), you certify that you are indeed at least 15 years of age. To sign that statement and submit your application while under age for the program may result in dismissal from the program if you were accepted.

8. When can I submit my application?

Each opportunity with the Education Department Volunteer Program has its own specific application periods and deadlines for the submission of the application. Please check our website at www.nyaquarium.com/volunteering for updated application deadlines. Please do not submit your applications before the start of the application period for your chosen volunteer opportunity. The staff receives hundreds of applications and to help the staff stay organized and on schedule with responses, it is best if applications do not begin arriving to our offices before the start of the application period you’re your selected volunteer opportunity.

9. When is the Application Deadline for the opportunities within the Education Volunteer Program?

All Applications and Teacher Recommendations must be received no later than 4:00pm EST on the specific opportunity’s deadline date. Deadline dates will vary and are based on the specific opportunity with the Education Volunteer Program. Applications and/or Teacher Recommendation Forms received after the deadline date will not be considered. Only education volunteer applicants, regardless of specific volunteer opportunity selected, who are currently enrolled in high school are required to submit a teacher recommendation form.

10. Will any of the opportunities within the Education Volunteer Program extend the deadline date?

The Volunteer Office has on occasion extended the deadline date for applications and teacher recommendation forms. If there is a deadline extension, the date will be posted on the aquarium website at www.nyaquarium.com/volunteering. The extended deadline will supersede the original deadline on the website. Applications and/or Teacher Recommendation Forms received after the extended deadline date and time will not be considered.

11. How do I submit my completed application for the Education Volunteer Program?

Completed applications and teacher recommendation forms may be submitted to the Education Volunteer Office by mail, e-mail or in person. The mailing address and e-mail address are located on both the application and teacher recommendation form.

By Mail: WCS- New York Aquarium, Coordinator of Volunteers, Education Department, Surf Avenue @ West 8th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11224

By E-Mail: Scan your completed application and teacher recommendation form and e-mail it to nyadocent@wcs.org

In Person: You may drop off your application and teacher recommendation form in an envelope clearly marked "Attn. Coordinator of Volunteers, Education Department, Date, Time Sensitive" at the New York Aquarium's Main Lobby Saturdays through Thursdays. Lobby staff will forward your application to the education department.

12. The application requires a Teacher Recommendation Form. Can I submit a letter of recommendation instead?

You may submit a letter of recommendation, however, if you are still enrolled in High School at the time you are submitting your application (even if you are graduating in June) you must also have a teacher complete the official Teacher Recommendation Form. Letters of Recommendation from teachers will not be reviewed unless they are accompanied by the official Teacher Recommendation Form.

13. Do I have to submit the recommendation form with my application or can it be sent separately?

You may submit your application separately from your recommendation form. However, your application will not be processed until we have the Teacher Recommendation Form. If your teacher is sending the completed form separately, please be sure to check with him/her to ensure they have submitted the form to be received by the volunteer office before the deadline. Teacher recommendation forms received after the deadline will not be reviewed and the application packet will be considered incomplete.

14. My teacher sent the completed Recommendation Form, but he/she submitted it late. Will I still be considered for the Education Volunteer Program?

Applications and Teacher Recommendation Forms must be received by 4:00pm EST on the posted deadline date (see website) to be considered. Late applications or late recommendation forms will not be reviewed.

15. I only became aware of the opportunities within the Education Volunteer Program after the deadline. Can I still submit an application?

Due to the large number of applications that are received, we cannot accept applications after the deadline has past. Applications received after 4:00pm EST on the deadline date (see website) will not be considered.

16. Can I include a copy of my school transcript?

Please do not include copies of your school transcript. The Education Volunteer Office does not consider school transcripts in the application process and will not review them.

17. As an Education Volunteer, will I be able to feed any of the animals at the aquarium?

Education Volunteers do not feed or take part in the husbandry of any of our wildlife. The only animal contact Education Volunteers will have is at our Touch Pool, where we educate aquarium visitors about the wildlife, their habitats, and conservation while allowing them to touch the various marine invertebrates at the pool.

18. I have reviewed the schedule for the training session I have applied for. I will not be able to attend 1 or more days of training because of participation in a family vacation or another program. Would I still be eligible to apply to the Education Volunteer Program?

Each year, the Volunteer Office receives hundreds of applications. In an effort to be fair, we give consideration to those applicants who submit completed applications on time and who can participate in

all days of training associated with their chosen volunteer opportunity. The Volunteer Office will give consideration to those applicants who may have religious observance during training that would prevent them from being present only. However, in cases where training is only 2 days long, this may not be possible and the applicant may have to reapply at a future date when he/she is available to attend.

The trainee who is absent (regardless of reason) misses a lot of information. Education Volunteer Training (regardless of which specific role was selected) consist of more than just PowerPoint lectures. Training may include team building exercises, hands on activities/demonstrations, tours, and more may take place. Many of the portions of training are also conducted by guest speakers. For these reasons, missed days cannot be made up. Any quizzes or exams that are missed also cannot be made up. Trainees who are absent (regardless of reason) are still required to submit all assignments on time. Late assignments will not be accepted.

19. I have submitted my application and teacher recommendation form (if required). When will I be called to schedule an interview?

The Volunteer Office receives hundreds of applications from interested individuals. Each application is painstakingly reviewed and processed. Applicants who have their applications selected to move on to the interview phase are contacted directly to schedule interviews. Interviews are scheduled and conducted during the application period for each volunteer opportunity.

Unfortunately, due to the high number of applications received, not every applicant is interviewed. All applicants who have submitted a completed application packet (application and teacher recommendation form) will be notified of their status officially via e-mail approximately two (2) weeks before the start of their training.

20. When are interviews conducted?

Interviews are scheduled for weekends. Interviews are scheduled and conducted during the application period for each volunteer opportunity. The Education Volunteer Office does not conduct interviews on weekdays.

Generally, there are two sessions of interviews scheduled. Each interview session involves a group orientation followed by individual interviews. This process can take up to 3 hours per session. After the individual interview is completed, the applicant is free to leave and enjoy the rest of their day. Applicants should be prepared to stay for the entire 3 hour session.

21. What should I wear to my interview?

While there is no need for business formal or business casual attire, applicants should keep in mind they are interviewing for a volunteer position at the Wildlife Conservation Society's New York Aquarium and should dress appropriately. Dressy casual attire is appropriate for an interview.