

# Fort Wayne Zoo is Now Recognized as a Certified Autism Center™

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA, UNITED STATES, April 17, 2025

/EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Fort Wayne Zoo](#) earns the [Certified Autism Center™](#) (CAC) designation, which is awarded by the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES). This certification recognizes organizations that have completed an autism-specific training and certification program through IBCCES to enhance their services and equip staff with knowledge of the best skills and resources to assist autistic and sensory-sensitive individuals. Additionally, IBCCES conducted an onsite review, offering the zoo valuable insights on improving their facilities and developing detailed sensory guides as part of the certification process.



“This certification is just one way we are working to ensure the Fort Wayne Zoo is accessible to each of our guests. We know this is one more tool that helps the zoo not only make a great experience for guests, but also for current and potential employees as we strive to create a ‘Zoo for All’ and continue our quest to be an employer of choice for those with disabilities,” says Rick Schuiteman, executive director. “Thanks to our partner, AWS Foundation, for funding the extensive autism sensitivity and awareness training our staff has undergone. I am very proud that the Fort Wayne Zoo is the first zoo in the tristate area to become a Certified Autism Center™.”

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*Rick Schuiteman, executive director*

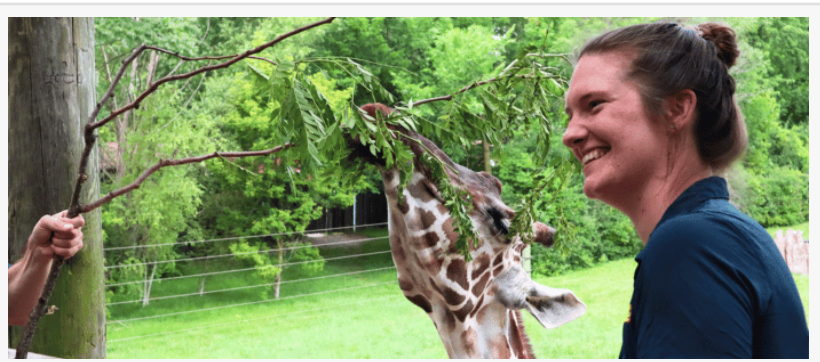
Families often face challenges when choosing attractions and recreational activities due to

uncertainties about available accommodations and how they will be received. With the CAC designation, Fort Wayne Zoo aims to alleviate these concerns by demonstrating their commitment to inclusivity and accessibility.

"Fort Wayne Zoo becoming a Certified Autism Center™ is a significant step towards creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for all families. This achievement reflects their dedication to enhancing the visitor experience for autistic individuals and their commitment to continuous improvement in accessibility and staff training. We are proud to recognize their efforts and the positive impact they are making in the community," says Myron Pincomb, IBCCES board chairman.

For over 20 years, IBCCES has led the industry in cognitive disorder training and certification for professionals in education, healthcare, and corporate sectors worldwide. IBCCES offers evidence-based training and certification programs developed in collaboration with clinical experts and autistic individuals, aiming to equip professionals with a deeper understanding of how to effectively communicate and interact with individuals who have cognitive differences or sensory needs. These programs emphasize industry best practices and incorporate the latest research.

Additionally, IBCCES also created [AutismTravel.com](https://www.autismtravel.com), a free online resource for parents that lists certified locations and professionals. Each organization listed on the site has met Certified Autism Center™ (CAC) requirements.



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About IBCCES

Delivering the global standard for training and certification in the fields of autism, neurodiversity, and accessibility – IBCCES provides a series of certification programs that empower professionals to be leaders in their field and improve the outcomes for the individuals they serve. For over two decades, IBCCES has been a global leader, setting the industry standard in autism and cognitive differences training. IBCCES works in over 111 countries and provides training in 8 languages, and its programs have been recognized around the world as the leading benchmark in training and certification.

In addition to individual certification programs, IBCCES partners with cities, destinations, and organizations on initiatives like the Certified Autism Destination™ (CAD) and Autism Certified City™ (ACC), ensuring autistic and sensory-sensitive residents and visitors feel welcomed and safe. Destinations that achieve the CAD designation have completed a specialized program that ensures a multitude of recreation, hospitality and entertainment organizations have completed an autism and sensory-sensitivity training, certification and IBCCES facilities review process. The ACC designation expands on that program and includes IBCCES training and certification for the public safety, education, healthcare and workplace sectors.

IBCCES also created the Accessibility App, AutismTravel.com, and CertifiedAutismCenter.com – free resources for individuals with a variety of neurodiversities and disabilities, listing certified locations and connecting individuals to other resources and each other.

#### About Fort Wayne Zoo

The Fort Wayne Zoo is northeast Indiana's largest tourist attraction, hosting more than 650,000 guests annually. The zoo is home to Red Panda Ridge named #6 in USA Today's 10 Best Zoo Exhibits for 2024. In 2021, the Zoo was voted Visit Indiana's "Summer Bucket List Top Attraction" and is consistently named one of the nation's "Top Ten Zoos for Kids" by national media outlets.

The zoo is a conservation leader, investing nearly \$275,000 annually to local, regional, and international efforts to protect wild animals and habitats. The zoo cares for more than 1,500 animals and participates in 41 cooperative species survival plans and 42 taxon advisory groups, which are critical to supporting threatened species.

As a self-supporting facility, the Fort Wayne Zoo receives no tax dollars for daily operations, unlike most accredited zoos where those dollars fund approximately 40% of their annual operating budgets. The zoo's mission is made possible thanks to support derived from admissions, memberships, donations, group picnics, special ticketed events, and other visitation-related activities.

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