

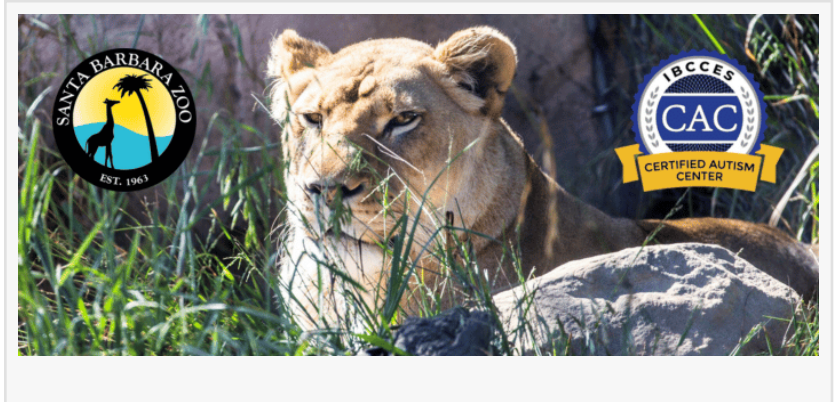
Santa Barbara Zoo Renews Certified Autism Center™ Designation, Continuing Commitment To Welcoming All Visitors

Santa Barbara Zoo was the first zoo on the West Coast to become a Certified Autism Center™ in 2018.

SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES, July 11, 2024

/EINPresswire.com/ -- [Santa Barbara Zoo](#) recently renewed its commitment to welcoming autistic visitors and those with sensory needs, by completing the

renewal process for its [Certified Autism Center™](#) (CAC) designation. The Zoo has held the designation, awarded by the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES), since 2018 and has worked to continuously meet renewal requirements as well as enhance its accessibility options.



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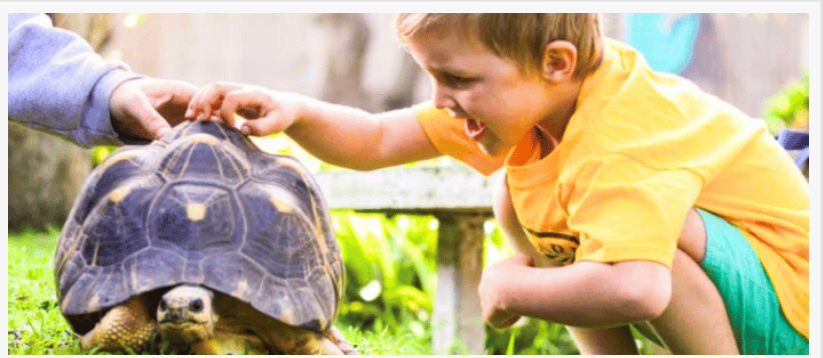
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JJ McLeod, Director of Education at the Santa Barbara Zoo

“The Santa Barbara Zoo prioritizes the welfare of our animals and the welfare of every guest and member of our community. We strive to create spaces where guests, staff and volunteers have access to safe and inclusive experiences. Continuing to be a Certified Autism Center™ creates a continued commitment for best practices surrounding neurodiversity. We are thankful that IBCCES continues to be a part of our inclusion and access work,” says JJ McLeod, Director of Education at the Santa Barbara Zoo.

Since becoming the first zoo on the West Coast to earn the certification, the zoo has made connections and partnerships with organizations that support the autism community. The zoo also provides sensory backpacks and offers designated quiet spaces for guests with special sensory needs. In addition, the zoo hosts Autism Safari nights, a social gathering for individuals with sensory sensitivities and their families. They also have a social narrative and other resources to help autistic guests and parents on their website.

Parents are also sharing their experiences about the benefits and need for these types of programs. One mother shared, "I am the mom who burst into tears when you told me that the SB Zoo was now autism certified and would be more than happy to allow my son to join Zoo Camp. I must have seemed crazy at the time, but I had just spent the two weeks prior tirelessly calling every summer camp in town and getting shut down by all of them. But when I called, you were not only willing to take him but you were excited about having him. Before Zoo Camp my son used to have severe social anxiety, not the average shyness you see in a preschooler but legit anxiety. In the four short weeks he attended Zoo Camp, I got to see him be a 'normal' kid for the first time. He says hi to strangers when we ask without shutting down, he let us leave him at camp even without his support there, he responded to his counselors when they talked to him, and even joined in group time for the first time in his life. With that small window of opportunity to practice his social skills, he is now thriving! There are just not enough words to express my gratitude."



"Working with the dedicated and passionate team at Santa Barbara Zoo has been a pleasure, and we're thrilled to continue our long-lasting partnership to ensure all families have options," says Myron Pincomb, IBCCES Board Chairman.

For more than 20 years, IBCCES has been the leader in cognitive disorder training and certification for healthcare, education, and corporate professionals around the globe. IBCCES created programs specifically for the hospitality and recreational organizations such as hotels, theme parks, and other attractions so staff would be more knowledgeable and other accommodations could be offered to this growing, but underserved, part of the community. IBCCES is the only credentialing board offering these types of programs, which include training from subject matter experts and autistic self-advocates, as well as long-term support and

continuous learning, onsite reviews, and more.

IBCCES also created [AutismTravel.com](https://www.autismtravel.com), as 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 Santa Barbara Zoo

Known as one of the world's most beautiful zoos, the Santa Barbara Zoo is located on 30 acres of botanic gardens and is home to nearly 500 individual animals in open, naturalistic habitats. It is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA), representing the highest level of animal care, and participates in AZA cooperative programs for endangered species including Masai giraffe, California condor, Island fox, and Western lowland gorilla, among others. The Santa Barbara Zoo is the region's top visitor attraction, attracting nearly 500,000 guests yearly, and has more than 13,000 members. Visit www.sbzoo.org.

About IBCCES

Delivering The Global Standard for Training and Certification in The Field of Cognitive Disorders – IBCCES provides a series of certifications that empower professionals to be leaders in their field and improve the outcomes for the individuals they serve. These programs are recognized around the world as the leading benchmark for training and certification in the areas of autism and other cognitive disorders.

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