

The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens Renews Certified Autism Center™ Designation

Originally designated as a CAC in 2022, The Living Desert continues to prioritize accessibility and inclusion for autistic guests and their families.

PALM DESERT, CA, UNITED STATES,
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The International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES) announces the renewal of the [Certified Autism Center™](#) (CAC) designation for [The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens](#), a beloved Southern California destination featuring more than 600 animals representing 141 species across immersive desert habitats. First, earning the designation in 2022, The Living Desert continues to



prioritize accessibility and inclusion for autistic guests and their families. As part of the renewal process, at least 80% of guest-facing staff and management completed updated autism-specific training, reaffirming the Zoo's commitment to better communicating with and supporting autistic and sensory-sensitive individuals while strengthening safety awareness and response protocols.

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*Allen Monroe, President/CEO
of The Living Desert Zoo and
Gardens*

“We are proud to renew our certification as a Certified Autism Center™,” says Allen Monroe, President/CEO of The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens. “This kind of training reflects the Zoo's ongoing commitment to creating an inclusive, welcoming environment where every guest and family can feel supported, understood, and able to fully

enjoy their experience with us.”

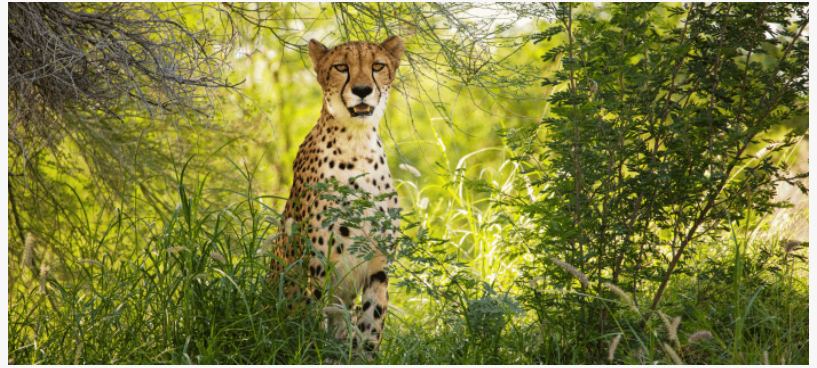
“Taking this training helped me better understand how to support autistic individuals with more patience, confidence, and respect,” shares Elisa Escobar, Sr. Manager of Guest Experiences at The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens. “It's given me practical tools to create a more welcoming and inclusive experience for everyone we serve.”

Autism and sensory training helps zoo and gardens staff better understand and support guests while creating a more welcoming and comfortable experience throughout the destination. The training also helps staff feel more confident responding to individual needs, allowing guests and families to explore animal exhibits, gardens, and other experiences with greater peace of mind.

The Living Desert continues to offer a range of accessibility accommodations, including sensory bags equipped with fidget tools, noise-canceling headphones, and other resources available for guest checkout. The Zoo features wide, paved pathways to support accessibility for strollers and wheelchairs, with wheelchairs and mobility scooters available for daily rental.

Additional support includes monoculars and assistive listening devices for guests with low vision or hearing impairments. Guests who require assistance from an accompanying aide are provided with a complimentary daytime admission ticket for that individual.

“The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens’ renewed commitment to the Certified Autism Center™ designation demonstrates the important role that accessible and inclusive experiences play in connecting people with wildlife and nature,” says Myron Pincomb, CEO and Board Chairman of IBCCES. “By continuing to invest in staff training and accessibility, The Living Desert is helping ensure that more guests and families can experience all that the Zoo and Gardens have to offer in a welcoming and supportive environment.”



By renewing its CAC designation, The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens continues to support Greater Palm Springs' designation as a [Certified Autism Destination™](#) (CAD), an initiative spearheaded by Visit Greater Palm Springs. The CAD designation means visitors have multiple trained and certified options to choose from when visiting the area, including entertainment, recreation, and lodging.

For 25 years, IBCCES has been a leader in providing autism, sensory, and neurodiversity training and certification for professionals worldwide, including those in healthcare, education, public safety, travel, and corporate sectors. As the only credentialing board offering these programs, IBCCES provides training from subject matter experts and autistic self-advocates, along with long-term support, continuous learning, onsite reviews, and renewal requirements to ensure continued growth and lasting impact.

To further support inclusivity efforts, The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens is featured on the IBCCES Accessibility App, which is free to download. This app provides individuals with a variety of disabilities real-time guidance on certified destinations, sensory-friendly spaces, and tailored recommendations. By connecting users to accessible locations worldwide, the app helps ensure seamless, enjoyable experiences for everyone.

IBCCES also provides access to resources such as [AccessibilityCertified.com](#) and [AutismTravel.com](#), which are free online tools for families that list certified locations and professionals. Each organization listed on the sites has met IBCCES certification requirements.

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About The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens

The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens has been a beloved institution in Southern California for over 50 years. An Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accredited zoo, The Living Desert represents the desert environments of North America, Australia, and Africa with more than 600 animals in our care, 141 species, 1,200 protected acres, and miles of hiking trails.

With conservation at the heart of everything it does, The Zoo is actively engaged in 105+ conservation projects in 12 countries, including international field conservation efforts, local habitat restoration, and on-site initiatives. By connecting guests to individual animals in immersive habitats, The Living Desert strives to create conservation advocates for nature and wildlife.

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 industry leaders and improve the outcomes for the individuals they serve. For 25 years,

IBCCES has been a global leader, setting the industry standard in autism and cognitive differences training. IBCCES works in over 125 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 AccessibilityCertified.com – free resources for individuals with a variety of neurodiversities and disabilities, listing certified locations and connecting individuals to other resources and each other.

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