

Docent & Discovery Guide Programs

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. Who can apply to the Docent & Discovery Guide Programs?

Anyone one who is interested in conservation, wildlife, and protecting our natural resources through education is encouraged to apply to either the Docent or Discovery Guide Programs. 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.

Docents and Discovery Guides 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 Docent program must be 20 years of age or older, while Discovery Guide Program applicants must be between 15 and 19 years of age. The Docent Program can be a rewarding experience for college and graduate students, adults who are still in the workforce or retired and seniors.

2. Are the Docent and Discovery Guide Programs paid internships?

The Docent and Discovery Guide Programs are both unpaid volunteer programs. The Docent and Discovery Guide Programs do not offer paid or unpaid internships to teens or college students. Transportation expenses and meals are provided by the volunteer. The Docent and Discovery Guide Programs do not offer or provide assistance with lodging.

3. I need community service credit for school. Can I satisfy my school requirements through the Docent or Discovery Guide Programs?

The Docent and Discovery Guide Programs are first and foremost volunteer programs who's 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". Docents and Discovery Guides help WCS achieve this mission by engaging with aquarium guests at our exhibits.

While Docents and Discovery Guides 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 number of service and enrichment hours for either the Docent or Discovery Guide Program 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 Docent or Discovery Guide Program regardless of school deadlines.

4. 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 Discovery Guide 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.

5. **Can I submit my application before March 1st?**

You may submit your application on or after March 1st. Please do not submit your applications to the Docent or Discovery Guide Program before March 1st. The staff receives hundreds of applications each year 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 March 1st.

6. **When is the Application Deadline for the Docent and Discovery Guide Programs?**

All Applications and Teacher Recommendations must be received no later than 4:00pm EST on May 1st. Applications and/or Teacher Recommendation Forms received after the deadline date will not be considered. Only Discovery Guide applicants who are currently enrolled in high school are required to submit a teacher recommendation form

7. **Will the Docent or Discovery Guide Programs extend the deadline date?**

The Docent and Discovery Guide Programs have 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/docents. The extended deadline will supersede the original May 1st deadline on the application and teacher recommendation form. Applications and/or Teacher Recommendation Forms received after the extended deadline date and time will not be considered.

8. **How do I submit my completed application for the Docent or Discovery Guide Programs?**

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.

9. **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.

10. **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 docent office before the deadline. Teacher recommendation forms received after the deadline will not be reviewed and the application packet will be considered incomplete.

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

Applications and Teacher Recommendation Forms must be received by 4:00pm EST on May 1st to be considered. Late applications or late recommendation forms will not be reviewed.

12. I only became aware of the Docent and/or Discovery Guide Program after the deadline. Can I still submit an application?

Due to the large number of applications that are received each spring, we cannot accept applications after the deadline has past. Applications received after 4:00pm EST on May 1st will not be considered.

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

Please do not include copies of your school transcript. The Education Volunteer Office will not review school transcripts.

14. As a Docent or Discovery Guide, will I be able to feed any of the animals at the aquarium?

Docents and Discovery Guides do not feed or take part in the husbandry of any of our wildlife. The only animal contact Docents and Discovery Guides 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.

15. I have reviewed the schedule for the training session I have applied for. I will not be able to attend 2 or more days of training because of participation in a family vacation or another program. Would I still be eligible to apply to the Docent Program?

Each year, the Docent and Discovery Guide Programs 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 7 days of training. The Docent Office will give consideration to those applicants who may have religious observance during training that would prevent them from being present only.

The trainee who is absent (regardless of reason) misses a lot of information. Docent and Discovery Guide Training consist of more than just PowerPoint lectures. Team building exercises, hands on activities/demonstrations, tours, and more take place. Many of the lectures 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.

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

The Docent and Discovery Guide Programs receives hundreds of applications each spring 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 beginning the 2nd or 3rd week of March through the end of May for the summer training course and until the end of July for the fall training course.

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 officially via e-mail by June 8th (for summer) or July 25th (for fall) of their status.

17. When are interviews conducted?

Interviews are scheduled for weekends. Interviews are scheduled and conducted beginning the 2nd or 3rd week of March through the end of May for the summer training course and until the end of July for the fall training course. 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.

18. 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 with the Docent or Discovery Guide Programs.