NATIONAL AQUARIUM®

YOUTH EXHIBIT GUIDE PROGRAM FACT SHEET

Since 1982, the National Aquarium Youth Exhibit Guide Program has provided local high school students with the opportunity to spend their summer volunteering as guides in the Aquarium's exhibits. Through this program, students get a realistic look at careers in marine biology, gain valuable work experience, and connect with other students who share similar interests. The program is coordinated by the Volunteer Engagement department.

ELIGIBILITY & REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for consideration, all students must meet the following requirements:

- Completion of 9th grade by June 2027.
- Strong interest in marine biology, environmental science, conservation, or related fields.
- Commitment to complete the ***entire*** summer program. This consists of:
  - Youth Exhibit Guide program orientation **(May 16)** and training sessions **(June 21–25)**.
    - *Complete attendance is mandatory.*
  - Twelve scheduled shifts over six weeks.
    - *Participants must attend at least ten shifts spanning five weeks.*
    - *All students are required to attend their assigned shifts during the first week* ***(June 28–July 4)***.

SELECTION

The Youth Exhibit Guide Program is competitive, and participation is limited for the Summer 2027 session. If accepted, participants will be asked to provide a $40 materials/registration fee. Need-based scholarships are available to our Baltimore City neighbors.

Student applicants should be mature, reliable, and friendly. They should express a strong interest in marine biology, environmental science, and/or conservation. It is important that all participants commit to the entire program, including attendance at all training sessions and volunteer shifts for the entire summer. Students are expected to complete a minimum of 85 hours of volunteer time (training sessions included). The program runs from June 29 until August 9, 2027.

Online applications open December 1, 2026, and close January 19, 2027. Applicants are expected to complete all application materials by the given deadline. Based on these applications, a portion of the applicants will be invited to continue the selection process through an in-person interview. Members of the Volunteer Engagement team and current Youth Exhibit Guide participants will interview applicants at the Aquarium and make final candidate selections according to the above criteria. Interviews will be held on **February 27, February 28, March 6, and March 7, 2027** (dates subject to change).

Students will be notified of their selection within two weeks of their interview. To account for students' changing schedules and availability, a position on a waitlist may be offered to some. Since more students apply for the program than can be accommodated, it is our goal to ensure that the students chosen will be able to attend training and complete the program successfully.

NATIONAL AQUARIUM®

YOUTH EXHIBIT GUIDE PROGRAM FACT SHEET

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

All Youth Exhibit Guide Program volunteers work as guides in the Aquarium's exhibits, answering questions about animals, their habitats, and the Aquarium in general. Students do **NOT** work directly with the animals except in the *Living Seashore* exhibit. To prepare for these roles, students must attend intensive volunteer training courses that include studying exhibits and their inhabitants, the Chesapeake Bay, conservation, interpretation techniques, and customer service skills.

It is mandatory for all students to attend their assigned shifts during the first week of the program (June 28–July 4). Students are expected to arrive on time, arrange for substitutes from within the group if they must miss a shift and inform supervisors of any change in schedule. Students are expected to comply with the Aquarium uniform policy, conduct themselves in a professional and responsible manner and behave according to all staff guidelines.

ORIENTATION & TRAINING

Students receive extensive training to prepare for their roles in exhibits. **Orientation and all trainings are mandatory.** The training schedule is as follows *(dates and times subject to change):*

ORIENTATION	
DATE	**TIME**
Sunday, May 16	5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

TRAINING	
DATE	**TIME**
Monday, June 21	8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Tuesday, June 22	8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Wednesday, June 23	8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Thursday, June 24	8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Friday, June 25	8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

NATIONAL AQUARIUM®

YOUTH EXHIBIT GUIDE PROGRAM FACT SHEET

SCHEDULES & ATTENDANCE

Students volunteer from **June 28 through August 8**. Youth Exhibit Guides are assigned two 4-hour shifts per week. Participants should consider whether transportation to the Aquarium two days per week will be feasible.

Shifts are 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. OR 12:30 to 4:30 p.m. Shifts are scheduled based on participant availability and to evenly distribute participants across shifts. To cover all shifts adequately, students may be assigned to shifts other than their first or second choices, including weekends. Students will be scheduled for two shifts per week on two separate days. Shift times and days will be consistent across all six weeks. When giving schedule preferences, students must be available for at least one weekend day.

Students are expected to meet the commitment to work each assigned shift during the 6-week summer session. However, to allow for family vacations and other obligations, students are permitted to miss no more than two shifts during the six-week program (equaling one week). Students who need to miss a shift are required to arrange for their own substitutes and make up the time missed. Students must attend five out of the six weeks of the program, meaning they cannot "stack" shifts and miss more than one week.

Students may be offered the opportunity to continue as Youth Exhibit Guides after the summer if they successfully complete the summer session. The school-year session requires students to work one weekend shift every other week.

PERKS

As part of their participation in the Youth Exhibit Guide program, students will receive:

- Free parking at LAZ Inner Harbor Garage.
- An Aquarium uniform t-shirt and other Aquarium gear as needed. Students must supply their own khaki pants or shorts to complete the uniform.
- Admission to the Aquarium using a provided ID badge. The badge must be returned at the end of the program.
    - Upon successful completion of all training sessions and active participation in the program, participants are given two general admission tickets.
- Training and job experience. Exceptional performance could result in eligibility for continuation in the program during the school year.
- Opportunity to meet people (and animals) from all over the world.
- Opportunity to work with others who share interests in marine biology and conservation.
- Gain confidence, make new friends, and work at Maryland's most popular tourist attraction.
- Students may use Aquarium volunteer hours to fulfill their high school community service requirement.

QUESTIONS?

Please reach out to exhibitguides@aqua.org.