SOCIAL NARRATIVE: VISITING ELMWOOD PARK ZOO

Created by EPZ Education Department
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When I walk around the zoo, I will see all kinds of animals. Some animals are very big, while some are very small! I can take as many pictures of the animals as I want.
When I first walk into the zoo I will see Olivia’s Eagle Canyon. This is where I can go see the eagles who live at the zoo.

Eagles are “birds of prey” and use their sharp talons to hunt for food.

If I look down, I will see the koi fish in Olivia’s Eagle Canyon Pond. I can purchase fish food to feed the koi fish. I must be careful not to drop anything other than fish food into the exhibit.
If I walk to the left of Olivia’s Eagle Canyon, I can see giraffes and zebras. Giraffes are tall and spotted whereas zebras are striped.

If I buy tickets, I might be able to feed the giraffes. I have to listen to directions. I cannot touch or pet the giraffes or zebras because it might scare them.
Barn and Chickens

The barn is where I can see the donkeys, sheep and goats. The Barn might have a strong smell. I can leave or hold my nose if I do not like the smell.

I can pet and feed the animals in the barn. I should be careful and kind to the animals - they have teeth and can bite if they get excited.
The chickens have a strong smell. I can hold my nose or leave if I do not like the smell. I can feed the chickens, but I should not try to touch the chickens.

I must wash my hands after touching or feeding these animals. There is a hand-washing station in the barn. The barn has automatic hand dryers that are very loud.
The Bird of Paradise exhibit is where I can see a lot of colorful birds. If I buy a ticket, I can feed them. I have to be careful because the birds can bite.

The Bird of Paradise exhibit might be very noisy and have a strong smell. I can wear headphones or hold my nose if the noise or smell is too overwhelming.
Trail of the Jaguar is where I can go to see the jaguars. Jaguars have spots and big teeth. I am safe looking at the jaguars from behind the glass. I should not tap on the glass because it could scare them.

On a hot day, this is a good spot to visit because it is an indoor exhibit with air conditioning.

This exhibit has an inside area that might get very noisy. I can wear headphones or walk back outside if I start to feel overwhelmed.
There are lots of other animals who live in the Trail of the Jaguar exhibit, like an ocelot and burrowing owls.

The ocelot is “nocturnal” meaning he sleeps during the day. I might not be able to see him.
The Wildlife Lodge is home to golden lion tamarins, white-faced saki monkeys, bats, frogs, cougars and many other fun animals.

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The red pandas live next to the Wildlife Lodge. I might see them playing in their outside yard, or inside their building.
The Prairie area is where I can see the bison, elk and prairie dogs. Bison are very big, but they mainly eat plants.

I might be able to feed the bison if I buy a ticket. If I feed them, I have to follow directions. Their tongues might feel wet and slimy, so I can wash my hands or use hand sanitizer after I feed them.
The male elk has big antlers. Each year his antlers will fall off so newer and bigger antlers can grow back. Female elk do not have antlers, so that is how you can tell them apart.

Prairie dogs are not actually dogs. The can make a barking sound to warn the other prairie dogs of danger. The prairie dogs live in tunnels underground, so I might not see them.
Capybaras are the largest rodent in the whole world. They normally live in South America and they are very good at swimming. I might even see them swim around in their pond.

Peccaries are similar to pigs. They have a big snout and are hairy. I can watch them walk around their exhibit.
I will walk on a boardwalk to get to the Wetlands. I might see otters, porcupines, flamingos, a bobcat and even an alligator.

River otters are really good swimmers, I might see them swim around in their pool. I should never try to touch the otters or throw any objects into their home.
The Carousel can be fun, but I have to buy a ticket to ride it. It can also be noisy and it moves around in circles. If I do not like noises or rides, I should not go on the Carousel.

The Caterpillar Train is only for kids under a certain height, so I might be too big to ride. I need to buy a ticket if I want to ride this ride.

Both the Carousel and the Caterpillar Train are not always open and might be closed when I visit.
When I visit the zoo, I can play on the playground. There are two playgrounds at the zoo.

There is a big playground over by the Wetlands area. This playground can be very noisy and crowded. I have to be careful and wait my turn.

The Eagle’s Nest is a small slide near the front of the zoo. It can be crowded and I have to make sure that I wait my turn.

If I get overwhelmed, I can ask my guardian to leave the playground.
If I get scared or overwhelmed, I can take a break in the Quiet Space. It is a fenced area with a bench that is quieter than the rest of the zoo. The Quiet Space is located right by William’s Prairie Dog Town.

I can go to the Quiet Space with the adult who brought me. I can sit and feel safe in the Quiet Space. I can go back into the zoo when I feel ready.
The Lenore Weiss Nature Shop is the souvenir shop at the zoo. I will exit the zoo through this shop.

Sometimes the Nature Shop can be crowded and loud. I can cover my ears if the noise is too loud. I must stay with my guardian.

When I leave the zoo, I must return the sensory pack in the Nature Shop if I checked one out.

We look forward to seeing you next time at Elmwood Park Zoo!