



How to Transition to a Sanctuary

NAPSA and its members have been approached by animal care facilities that wish to become sanctuaries but are overwhelmed with the necessary changes, and aren't sure what steps to take because there are many [ways in which sanctuaries differ from other facilities](#). We wish to encourage and support any organization looking to make positive changes and become a reputable sanctuary. Transitioning to a true sanctuary is better for the animals and also better for gaining public support. Here are some ways to begin making the shift:

1. **Nonprofit status:** True sanctuaries are registered state and federal 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations. Earning this status will benefit your organization due to decreased tax liabilities, increased legitimacy and the ability to accept tax-deductible donations.
2. **Licensing and accreditation:** Animal care standards of the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries or the Association of Zoos and Aquariums are publicly available. Even if a facility cannot currently meet the standards, it can create a plan to make the changes necessary to eventually meet the standards. External approval and oversight will ensure donor confidence and the safety of not just the animals, but of staff and the organization as well.
3. **Animal care:** Sanctuaries do not remove their animals from the property or permit public contact or handling. This is safest for the animals and humans involved. Additionally, sanctuaries do not breed animals or engage in commercial trade in animals or their products. The more a facility can commit to this sanctuary ethos, the more it will be able to establish itself as a bona fide sanctuary with the animals' well-being as its first priority.
4. **Fundraising:** Sanctuaries are not open to the public. Facilities accustomed to profiting from daily entrance fees will have to transition to earning revenue from foundation grants and public donations, which are easier to come by when one is established as a sanctuary.
5. **Documentation via policies and procedures:** Ensure that everyone involved in the organization, from staff to volunteers, is aware of the policies set and has the training to carry out necessary procedures. Change is never easy, but this can be presented in a way that highlights the many proven benefits of operating as a true sanctuary.
6. **Be honest:** Former visitors to a facility may be disappointed initially to hear of changes being made, but honesty is key. Use social media and other forms of communication to explain that the facility has shifted priorities and is focused on providing enriched, lifetime care to the animals living there. It may lose some followers initially, but it will gain others who appreciate the renewed focus on animal welfare.
7. **Learn from experts:** There are many accredited sanctuaries who have been in operation for decades without compromising any of the standards listed above. It can be done! NAPSA can answer questions and give feedback to advise facilities wishing to implement these options. Email us at info@sanctuary-alliance.org to learn more.

For more information:

["A Guide for Modern Sanctuaries with Examples from a Captive Chimpanzee Sanctuary."](#) Amy Fultz

["Are Wildlife Sanctuaries Good for Animals?"](#) National Geographic

["Running a Sanctuary."](#) Jungle Friends Primate Sanctuary

["Standards of Excellence."](#) Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries

NAPSA is a fiscally sponsored project of Community Initiatives, an Oakland, CA-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

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