

What is a Child Life Specialist?

- Help children & their families navigate the emotionally & physically demanding process of hospitalization.
- Use age appropriate interventions to educate, prepare, & support children through difficult test, procedures, & diagnoses.
- Advocate for the child's emotional and developmental needs.

Tips to becoming a Child Life Specialist...

Before senior year:

1. Become familiar with <http://www.childlife.org/>

- This is your best friend through this entire process!
 - If you plan on pursuing a career in Child Life, then become a member of the Association of Child Life Specialists.
- Becoming a member costs \$75.
- Membership gives you access to all the needed information about becoming a child life specialist.
- Info about practicums & internships is located under **Students, Interns & Educators** (on www.childlife.org website)

2. Possible minor to complement your education: Conflict Analysis and Trauma Studies

3. Get Involved in Research

- K-State does not have research specifically within the child life field, but the following areas are suggested:
 - Research with children and families
 - Research on children with illnesses
 - Research on children with intellectual and or developmental disabilities
 - Recommended: **Dr. Brianna Goff's** "My child has more chromosome than yours" project.
 - Recommended: C. Ade's research on the current trends in cancer treatment.
 - Recommended:

- Recommended: S. and R. Rosenkranz's "Enhanced Health Promotion in Girl Scouts through Video-Based Leader Wellness Training" project.
- Recommended: S. Rosenkranz's "Tap to Togetherness" project.
- Recommended: B. Wiles' "Building Family Resilience Through Dance" project.
- Recommended: B. Wiles' "The Adaptive Learning Environment Community: Applying Four Work Mode Theory to Foster Creativity in a Fourth and Fifth Grade Classroom" project.
 - Contact **ksouza@ksu.edu**
- Research opportunities can be found on the email sent out by Dr. Michelle Toews each semester.
 - Dr. Toews (mltoews@ksu.edu) is a person to contact for help finding a research project.

4. Volunteer

- Extremely important for this career.
- Start EARLY, good references are a must, and sell yourself.
- Work with a population you are not the most comfortable with to gain the most from the experience.
- Recommended to look for experiences working with both typically developing children as well as hospitalized and/or children with illnesses.
 - Possible K-State options:
 - Stone House
 - Center for Child Development
- Recommend in a hospital setting on a pediatric floor.
- Possible options:
 - Camp Quality-camp for kids with cancer
(<http://campqualityusa.org/>)
 - Operation Smile
<http://operatio>

nsmile.org/

- Serious Fun Camps- camps for children with serious illnesses
(<https://www.seriousfunnetwork.org/>)
- Via Christi Hospital in Manhattan (does not have a pediatric floor)
- Children's Mercy Kansas City
- Camp Hope- summer camp for you who have, or have had, cancer (<http://camphopeheartland.com>)
- Stormont Vail Health in Topeka, KS
(<https://www.stormontvail.org/volunteer-services>)
- Check out childlife.org for more opportunities!
- **Mission Trips, Cultural Diversity, & Health Care Setting**

5. Eligibility Requirements for Certification Exams after 2019

- Bachelor's Degree
- 10 College Courses with content in the following areas:
 - Child Life Course Taught by a CCLS
 - Child Development Courses
 - Family Systems Course
 - Play Course
 - Loss/Bereavement or Death/Dying Course
 - Research Course
 - Three Additional Courses
- **Verified** K-State Courses:
 - Intro Child Life **HDFS 475—SPRING ONLY**
 - Families & Diversity—**HDFS 552**
 - Helping Relationship—**HDFS 301**
 - Understanding Trauma—**HDFS 529**
 - Family Relationships & Gender Roles—**HDFS 350**
 - Intro Human Development—**HDFS 110**
 - Middle Childhood & Adolescence—**HDFS 506**
 - Intro to Sociology—**SOCIO 211**

- General Psychology—**PSYCH 110**
- Early Childhood—**ECED 310**
- Medical Terminology—**CLSCS 105**
 - not required, but helpful
- Link for more information on classes:
<https://www.childlife.org/docs/default-source/certification/2019-eligibility-details.pdf?sfvrsn=4>
- Internship
 - i. Minimum of 600 hours through a **Child Life Internship or Fellowship** under certified child life specialist.
 - i. In order to gain an internship many hospitals require you to have completed a Child Life Practicum.
 - ii. Practicums are about 150 hours vs. 600 hours for an internship
 - ii. Link for further practicum information:
 (<https://www.childlife.org/certification/students/practicum-students>)
- Link with more information regarding certification requirements:
<https://www.childlife.org/certification/students>

6. Preparing for an Internship

- Must be a minimum of a senior.
- Some hospitals require you to be affiliated with a University.
- Complete 10 college level courses approved by Child Life Council.
- Completion of a course taught by a CCLS.
- Minimum GPA 3.0 in core classes (HDFS courses).
- CLC Eligibility Assessment, hospitals want to see approved course work.
- This is a **must** to be able to take the exam.
- Apply to 10-15 different locations
- Complete volunteer work, practicum, and other related activities to stand out
- Link for help with internships:
<https://www.childlife.org/certification/students/internship-deadlines>

7. Certification Exam

- Pass exam
- Maintain certification with professional hours
- To take the exam, you will need to meet all the requirements stated above and have already received your degree.

8. Attend a Child Life 101 Workshop

- Check local hospitals
- Children's Mercy KC- 2018 sessions:
 - January 19, 7:45-12:00 PM
 - April 13, 7:45-12:00 PM
 - July 20, 7:45-12:00 PM
 - October 19, 7:45-12:00 PM
- i. Location: **Children's Mercy Hospital, Adele Hall Campus 2401 Gillham Road Kansas City, Missouri**
- ii. Contact: **Lucy Raab, MA, CCLS** lraab@cmh.edu
- iii. Registration Form: **childrensmercy.org**
 1. Search Child Life, click first link
 2. Click Child Life 101 Workshop
 3. Fills up quickly

9. Rescinded Certification Criteria Change as of January 2018:

- The Child Life Professional Certification Program had announced in 2017 that they were going to require students to receive a master's in Child Life to become certified.
- This change has recently been rescinded (January 2018). Thus, students **do not** need a master's to take the certification exam.
- **However**, the Child Life Professional Certification Program **may** be looking into the master's degree requirement in the future.
- The best way to stay up to date on criteria changes and policy updates is to frequently visit www.childlife.org

8. Universities with Child Life Programs

- This link includes both graduate and undergraduate programs:
<https://www.childlife.org/certification/students/child-life-academic-programs>



Child Life:

Empowering Children and Families



Children today confront a wide variety of stressful and potentially traumatic events that can overwhelm their natural ability to cope and heal. Experiences related to health care and hospitalization can lead to feelings of fear, confusion, loss of control, and isolation that can inhibit their natural development and have negative effects on their physical and emotional health.

Child life specialists are trained professionals who help children cope with the stress and uncertainty of illness, injury, disability, and hospitalization.



WHAT IS A CHILD LIFE SPECIALIST?

Child life specialists are child development experts who work to ensure that life remains as normal as possible for children in health care settings and other challenging environments. They promote effective coping through play, self-expression activities, and age-appropriate medical preparation and education. As advocates of family-centered care, child life specialists work in partnership with doctors, nurses, social workers and others to meet the unique emotional, developmental and cultural needs of each child and family.

Child life specialists work in general pediatric inpatient units, and often in specialty areas like the emergency department, surgical and intensive care units, and outpatient areas. Increasingly, child life services are also being offered in other settings, such as community outreach programs, private medical and dental practices, and special needs camps.



SERVICES PROVIDED BY CHILD LIFE SPECIALISTS

Child life specialists focus on the psychosocial and developmental needs of children, collaborating with families and other health care providers to:

- Prepare children for medical procedures or treatment using language that children understand
- Introduce coping strategies to help reduce anxiety and enhance cooperation with the health care team
- Provide support and distraction during medical procedures
- Offer opportunities for play and expressive activities, to encourage normal development and a sense of FUN in spite of challenging circumstances
- Promote family-centered care by providing information, advocacy and support to families of pediatric patients

PHOTO CREDITS (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP-LEFT): MINISTRY SAINT JOSEPH'S CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, MARSHFIELD, WI; THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL AT MONTEFIORE, BRONX, NY; MINISTRY SAINT JOSEPH'S CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, MARSHFIELD, WI



PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

Child life specialists have earned a bachelor's or master's degree with an educational emphasis on human growth and development or a related field of study. They adhere to a code of ethics and standards established by the Child Life Council, a professional organization which also administers the rigorous process for obtaining the Certified Child Life Specialist (CCLS) credential. All Certified Child Life Specialists must complete a supervised clinical internship, pass an examination, and adhere to standards for continuing professional development in order to maintain their certification.

RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THAT . . .

- Children who are prepared for medical procedures experience less fear and anxiety, and will have better long term adjustment to medical challenges.
- Children in the hospital who engage in therapeutic play with a trained professional exhibit less emotional distress, increased cooperation, and fewer negative physiological responses.
- Child life interventions can increase cooperation and help to reduce procedural and post-procedural pain.
- Providing support for family members enhances psychosocial outcomes for young patients. A parent or caregiver's behavior and anxiety levels are strongly correlated with how a child will respond to hospitalization.



NEED MORE INFORMATION?

If you are interested in obtaining child life services for your child and family, ask your physician or a health care administrator if child life services are available. For more information on the child life profession, please visit the Child Life Council website at www.childlife.org.

ABOUT THE CHILD LIFE COUNCIL

The Child Life Council is a non-profit organization that advances the well-being of children and families by promoting effective, quality child life services in health care environments. CLC organizes professional development opportunities for child life specialists, facilitates the exchange of knowledge and resources, and monitors the latest research and developments relevant to the child life profession. Through the administration of a professional credentialing program, CLC ensures a standard of quality and performance among those who have earned the Certified Child Life Specialist (CCLS) designation.



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*All information provided from <http://www.childlife.org/>