



University of Georgia/Georgia Health Sciences University Child Life Program Frequently Asked Questions



What is a Child Life Specialist?

A Child Life Specialist (CLS) works in healthcare settings and focuses on the emotional and developmental needs of children and families. Using play and other forms of communication, this professional member of the healthcare team seeks to reduce the stress associated with healthcare experiences and enables children and family members to cope in a positive manner. Career opportunities include working as a Child Life specialist or as a Child Life administrator in a hospital or other healthcare setting. Child life programs range in size from one child life specialist to more than twenty.

What is the Child Life Council?

The Child Life Council is the professional organization of Child Life Specialists. The Child Life Council has a website, www.childlife.org that contains information on membership, certification, conferences, careers, clinical training sites, current news in the field of Child Life, academic programs and resource materials.

What is the typical day of a Child Life Specialist?

Every day a Child Life Specialist helps children by preparing them for what

procedures and experiences they will encounter. Also, they try to create a less threatening environment for children in what can sometimes be a scary place. Daily activities will vary according to rotations to different units and the needs of the patients.

Is Child Life organized the same in all hospitals?

No, Child Life programs vary from hospital to hospital. Some departments are director based, which means that a director is in charge of many Child Life Specialists.

How do you become a Child Life Specialist?

To become a Child Life Specialist, you need a Baccalaureate degree in one of the following majors: Child Life, Child and Family Development, or other related field. You must also do a Child Life internship, which the Child Life Council states must be for at least 480 hours under the supervision of an experienced Certified Child Life Specialist. The last requirement for certification is that you must pass an exam given by the Child Life Council. Please visit the Child Life Council website, www.childlife.org, for further information about certification.

For additional information: www.fcs.uga.edu/cfd

On the side bar click the following: Undergraduate, Child Life Emphasis, Handbooks and Forms, Undergraduate Child Life Emphasis Handbook



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What is the Child Life Joint Program between GHSU and UGA?

The University of Georgia and the Georgia Health Sciences University have established a joint program that allows UGA students that are majoring in Child and Family Development with a Child Life Emphasis to complete their senior year Child Life training at GHSU.

What does the program entail?

Students spend three years at UGA taking Child and Family Development classes, and then they spend their senior year in Augusta participating in over 1000 hours of clinical experience with several Child Life Specialists. In addition to completing their clinical experience, students take coursework at the Georgia Health Science University. After completing these requirements, students graduate with a degree from UGA in Child and Family Development with a Child Life Emphasis.

In what departments do Child Life Specialists work at GHSU?

At the Georgia Health Sciences University, Child Life Specialists work in different parts of the hospital. They are as follows: the Emergency Room and Pediatric Intensive Care Unit, Hematology/ Oncology (both in and out patient children), Inpatient Medical Floor, out-patient clinics and the Surgical Unit.

What would my hours be during my senior year at GHSU?

Students work in clinical rotations in various shifts for extended periods of time. The hours often vary because the first Child Life Specialist arrives at the hospital around 6:30 a.m. and the last Child Life Specialist does not leave until close to midnight. This rotation of varied clinical positions allows students to experience many different aspects of Child Life. Students complete over 1000 hours of clinical training during their year at GHSU.

How many students are admitted each year?

Due to the intense supervision by GHSU staff, the Child Life program usually accepts no more than 4 students each year.

If available for the HOPE scholarship, will my education still be covered if I enter the joint program?

Yes, but it often takes a while to get through all of the paperwork.

When can I apply to the program?

You are eligible to apply when you have completed a minimum of 30 hours of coursework. Students usually apply during their sophomore or junior year of college.



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What are the requirements to apply and be accepted into the Child Life Emphasis?

Students need to have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 with at least 30 hours of class work and be formally admitted into the Department of Child and Family Development to be considered for the Child Life emphasis. Also, it is preferred that students have taken or be enrolled in CHFD 4810 Hospitalized Child and the Family before applying. Students must also have completed a shadowing experience with a certified Child Life Specialist. The Child Life Specialist must provide a letter documenting that you have shadowed at least 8 hours. This shadowing experience allows students to know more about the field of Child Life. Students must fill out an application and participate in an interview with Medical College of Georgia Health System staff. Keep in mind that you must apply and be accepted into the program to be considered for a Child Life Emphasis; you cannot just transfer into the Child Life program.

How can I increase my chances of being accepted?

Make sure that Child Life is the profession that is right for you. Get as much experience as possible working with well children and children in hospital settings. Gain experience by volunteering at a local children's hospital, on the pediatric floor of a general hospital, or at camps for children

with special needs. Understand the concerns of children with special needs through work at various camps, early intervention programs, and childcare. It is important that students understand the development of children. GHSU looks for interns that have a sound knowledge of child development, including Child Development theory, have a variety of experiences with children and are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about work in the field of Child Life.

What do I do if I am a senior and just learning about Child Life and the joint emphasis program?

There are a number of emphases for students in this position. Students should carefully consider the best emphasis for their career goals and may want to consult their advisor before deciding how to pursue their studies in Child Life. Students may choose to extend their time in an undergraduate program to participate in the joint Child Life emphasis; however, this does not guarantee your acceptance into the program. You must still apply and be accepted into the program in order to attend. As another alternative, students may choose to graduate and seek Child Life internship emphases on their own. Finally, students may pursue a Master's Degree in Child Life by entering into a graduate school program.