Child Life Specialist

DESCRIPTION OF THE FIELD

Child life specialists are trained professionals with expertise in helping children and their families overcome life’s most challenging events. Armed with a strong background in child development and family systems, child life specialists promote effective coping through play, preparation, education, and self-expression activities. They provide emotional support for families, and encourage optimum development of children facing a broad range of challenging experiences, particularly those related to healthcare and hospitalization. Because they understand that a child’s wellbeing depends on the support of the family, child life specialists provide information, support and guidance to parents, siblings, and other family members. They also play a vital role in educating caregivers, administrators, and the general public about the needs of children under stress.

Child life specialists have earned a minimum bachelor’s or master’s degree, with an educational emphasis on human growth and development, education, psychology, or a related field of study. They adhere to a code of ethics and standards established by the Child Life Council, and many have participated in the rigorous process for obtaining the Certified Child Life Specialist (CCLS) credential, which is administered by CLC. All Certified Child Life Specialists must complete a supervised 480-hour clinical internship, pass a national examination, and adhere to a minimum standard for continued professional development in order to maintain their certification. (Provided by the Child Life Council)

CAREERS

Child life specialists can work in a variety of settings including:

- Large pediatric facilities
- Smaller pediatric inpatient units
- Often service specialty areas like the emergency department, surgical and intensive care units, and outpatient units
- Outpatient healthcare facilities
- Doctors’ offices
- Hospice care
- Specialized camps, schools, court systems, and funeral homes

RESOURCES

For more information, please visit the following websites:

Child Life Council
http://www.childlife.org/