

CHILD LIFE SPECIALIST – M.S.

Program director

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Director of clinical training

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The Department of Counseling and Family Sciences offers high-quality academic education and clinical training leading to a master's degree in the child life specialist program. This degree prepares individuals to provide child life services in health-care settings. In addition, practice experiences within the United States and in other countries will provide students with child life practice in diverse environments.

The child life profession

Child life specialists are professionals in child development. They promote effective coping through play, preparation, education, and self-expression activities. Child life specialists provide emotional support for families and encourage optimal development of children facing a broad range of challenging experiences— particularly those related to health care and hospitalization. Understanding that a child's well-being 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 (Association of Child Life Professionals <http://www.childlife.org>).

Certification for the child life profession

Through the Association of Child Life Professionals, the certified child life specialist (CCLS) credential was developed to increase the proficiency of child life professionals by identifying a body of knowledge, uniform and improved standards of practice, and ethical conduct while enhancing the status and credibility of the profession. Requirements for certification are based on academic and internship experience, as well as successful completion of an examination process (Association of Child Life Professionals <http://www.childlife.org>).

Program learning outcomes

By the end of this program, the graduate should be able to:

1. Represent and communicate child life practice and psychosocial issues of infants, children, youth, and families.
2. Utilize theories of child development, stress and coping, and family systems in pediatric health environments.
3. Work collaboratively in diverse settings.
4. Identify as a professional child life specialist through membership and participation in professional organizations.
5. Apply the concepts of ethical and legal standards of the profession.
6. Describe the impact of health and health issues on a global level.
7. Satisfactorily complete a supervised practicum and internship in child life.

Professional experience

Students will participate in supervised clinical training at Loma Linda University Children's Hospital and various hospitals located in the United States. A 100-hour practicum and 600-hour internship are required to complete the master's degree. These experiences will provide an opportunity for students to build upon coursework and put theory into practice. Students will also have the opportunity to participate in various events such as grief camps, health fairs, global health trips, and other activities on campus designed to broaden their clinical experiences.

Financial assistance

Students accepted into the M.S. degree program may receive financial assistance through merit-based awards (teaching fellowships, and a variety of research and student service assistantships) or through need-based financial aid (a loan or the University's work/study program). Students may apply for financial aid by writing to:

Student Financial Aid Office
Student Services
Loma Linda University
Loma Linda, CA 92350
909/558-4509

Accreditation

Loma Linda University is accredited by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC), 1001 Marina Village Parkway, Suite 402, Alameda, CA 94501; telephone: 510/748-9001; fax: 510/748-9797; website: <http://www.wscuc.org/contact> (<https://www.wscuc.org/contact/>).

Admissions

Applicants must meet Loma Linda University (<http://llucatalog.llu.edu/about-university/admission-policies-information/#admissionrequirements>) and School of Behavioral Health (<http://llucatalog.llu.edu/behavioral-health/#generalregulation>) admissions requirements; and give evidence of academic ability, professional comportment, and mature judgment. Those who meet these requirements, as well as the published deadlines and are accepted into the program, may enroll during Autumn quarter.

Additional admission requirements include:

- Bachelor's degree in the social sciences or equivalent from an accredited college or university
- Minimum grade point average of 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) in bachelor's coursework for at least the final 45 units prior to graduation
- Written statement of purpose for applying to the program
- Interview with department faculty, as scheduled (on-campus group interviews are scheduled for January through March; other on-campus and telephone interviews are scheduled individually)
- Volunteer experience under the direction of a Certified Child Life Specialist is highly recommended

Pre-entrance requirements (<http://llucatalog.llu.edu/about-university/admission-policies-information/#preentrancerequirements>):

- Health clearance

Program requirements

Required

CHLS 501	Hospitalized Infant and Toddler Development	3
CHLS 502	Introduction to the Child-Life Profession	3
CHLS 503	Preparation for Clinical Placement	3
CHLS 504	Child Life Administration and Program Development	3
CHLS 505	Cross-Cultural Perspectives in Health Care ³	3
CHLS 506	Therapeutic Play for Children Affected by Illness and Injury	3
CHLS 507A	Aspects of Illness and Disease	3
CHLS 507B	Aspects of Illness and Disease	3
CHLS 508	Grief and Loss	3
CHLS 509	Child-Life Assessment	3
CHLS 604	Child Life Internship Seminar I	4
CHLS 605	Child Life Internship Seminar II	4
CHLS 606	Parenting Medically Fragile Children	3
CHLS 607	Child Life Professional	3
CHLS 608	Child Life Practicum	1
CHLS 609	Global Practice: Child Life Specialist	3
COUN 576	Exceptional and Medically Challenged Children	3
COUN/MFAM 584	Advanced Child and Adolescent Development	3
MFAM 501	Research Tools and Methodology: Quantitative	3
MFAM 515	Crisis Intervention and Client Advocacy	3
MFAM 516	Play Therapy	2
MFAM 553	Family Systems Theory	3
MFAM 568	Groups: Process and Practice	3
MFAM/COUN 644	Child Abuse and Family Violence	3
RELR 568	Care of the Dying and Bereaved (or equivalent)	3
Total Units		74

Clinical training^{1, 2}

CHLS 700	Clinical Training	2
CHLS 701	Clinical Training	6
CHLS 702	Clinical Training	6
Total Units		14

¹ Clinical training units (700-numbered courses) are in addition to the minimum didactic units required for the degree

² A minimum of 700 hours of clinical child life hours (CHLS 604, CHLS 605 and CHLS 608) completed within the degree program. Students must register for 14 clinical training units (CHLS 700, CHLS 701 and CHLS 702).

³ Fulfills service learning requirement

Other degree requirements

- Residence of at least two academic years.
- Students must meet the knowledge, skills, and professional performance competencies outlined by the program.

- Maintain a minimum grade point average of 3.0 (or a letter grade of B on a 4.0 scale) in order to progress successfully through the program and complete the degree. Any course with a grade below a B (3.0) must be repeated.

- Successful completion of a written comprehensive examination (taken before advancement to candidacy) and final oral and written examinations at the end of the program.

- Background check passed prior to matriculation.

Normal time to complete the program

Two (2) years (seven [7] academic quarters) – full-time enrollment required

Courses

CHLS 501. Hospitalized Infant and Toddler Development. 3 Units.

Emphasizes the development of infants and toddlers in hospital settings. Presents theory and research regarding socialization, emotional development, and temperament. Discusses bereavement, appropriate health, safety, and nutritional practices, and use of tools for effective practice.

CHLS 502. Introduction to the Child-Life Profession. 3 Units.

Teaches the evolution and history of child life, as well as the theoretical framework that guides the profession. Discusses topics such as professionalism and ethics as they relate to child-life practice. Exposes students to relevant research that constitutes an integral component of evidence-based practice. Shares clinical expectations for matriculation and certification through the Association of Child Life Professionals.

CHLS 503. Preparation for Clinical Placement. 3 Units.

Helps students develop a child-life specialist identity for clinical practice through readings, discussion of clinical practice placements, and formation of a personal philosophy. Students construct a cover letter, resume, and portfolio; as well as research clinical placement sites and become aware of the child-life specialist placement application and interviewing requirements. Discusses ACLP eligibility requirements and internship curriculum modules.

CHLS 504. Child Life Administration and Program Development. 3 Units.

Introduces students to the history and development of the child life profession. Health-care environment, administrative issues, program development, and outcome assessment process. Develops competencies and skills necessary to effectively administer a child life program.

CHLS 505. Cross-Cultural Perspectives in Health Care. 3 Units.

Introduction to the diversity of cultures and its impact on the delivery of health-care services. Explores characteristics of composition, cultural practices and preferences, and health-care issues faced by selected cultures. Presents human differences, preferences, biases, and stereotypes. Fosters development of awareness, sensitivity, and competence required to affirm diversity in health-care and practice settings.

CHLS 506. Therapeutic Play for Children Affected by Illness and Injury. 3 Units.

Teaches the developmental aspects of play therapy, in collaboration with the developmental stages of the child/teen and family in the context of a health-care setting. Provides student with an experiential understanding of play therapy, recreation therapy, education, and practice.

CHLS 507A. Aspects of Illness and Disease. 3 Units.

Teaches the child life student about the childhood disease process and describes the pathophysiology, symptoms, diagnostic testing, and treatment of disease. How disease affects the child and family's behavioral, social, and emotional development and coping strategies.

CHLS 507B. Aspects of Illness and Disease. 3 Units.

Provides students with information regarding the effects of disease and/or injury on the physical, emotional, and social needs of children/adolescents and their families. Discusses medical terminology as it relates to the hospitalized child. Provides students with techniques—from medical, psychological, and social aspects—to effectively deal with behaviors that accompany hospitalization.

CHLS 508. Grief and Loss. 3 Units.

Promotes understanding of various theories, and practices specific interventions that assist hospitalized children/teens or adult family members when they encounter issues of death, loss and/or grief. Students examine how these issues affect them personally and professionally; and describe their own epistemology regarding death, loss and grief. Examines these issues from a family-system's perspective in a hospital setting.

CHLS 509. Child-Life Assessment. 3 Units.

Orients students to child life in hospitals and other health-care environments; and gives attention to stress and coping assessments, along with other interventions used to assist patients and families. Examines additional interventions and significant variables, such as providing emotional support for families and encouraging optimum development of children facing a broad range of challenging experiences. Addresses roles and responsibilities of membership on an interdisciplinary team.

CHLS 600. Child Life Theory and Practice. 3 Units.

Examines children and their families in a health care setting from the perspective of a child life specialist. Demonstrates the role of the child life specialist in minimizing the stress and anxiety experienced during hospitalization. Focuses on educational and play components, as well as the general support and scope of practice that are unique to the field of child life.

CHLS 604. Child Life Internship Seminar I. 4 Units.

Blends didactic and experiential learning in order to bridge the gap between child-life theory and the application of child-life principles. Prepares students for clinical work in the field of child life. Discusses the clinical requirements recommended by the Association of Child Life Professionals (ACLP), with emphasis on the ACLP's standards of clinical practice. Enrollment requires registration for CHLS 701: Clinical Training. Prerequisite: CHLS 608.

CHLS 605. Child Life Internship Seminar II. 4 Units.

Blends didactic and experiential learning in order to bridge the gap between child-life theory and the application of child-life principles. Prepares students for work in the field of child life through the principles of clinical coursework shared in class. Discusses the clinical requirements recommended by the Association of Child Life Professionals (ACLP) and gives special attention to the standards of clinical practice set forth by the official documents of ACLP. Prerequisite: CHLS 608. Corequisite: CHLS 702.

CHLS 606. Parenting Medically Fragile Children. 3 Units.

Introduces students to parenting issues related to the medically fragile child. Provides knowledge of theories, techniques, skills, available community resources, and legal and ethical considerations that pertain to this specific group.

CHLS 607. Child Life Professional. 3 Units.

Prepares students for entering the professional field of child life by demonstrating clinical assessment, documentation, and skills related to child life practice. Includes application of ethical principles, as well as issues of professionalism. Requires a 100-hour practicum.

CHLS 608. Child Life Practicum. 1 Unit.

Students carry out assigned playroom duties: supervise activities that foster creativity, divert patients from stress and worry, and normalize their environment; and provide opportunities for patients and families to socialize and engage in developmentally appropriate activities. Students assist with bedside interaction and interventions and assist staff with escorting patients to other locations of the hospital for special programming.

CHLS 609. Global Practice: Child Life Specialist. 3 Units.

Introduction to child life practice in a global context. Examines ethical and practice issues associated with delivery of pediatric psychosocial services in health-care systems in underdeveloped and developed environments. Gives critical attention to issues of pediatric and adolescent growth and development, family-centered care, grief and loss, and advocacy. Shares models for learning and collaboration within the context of health-care delivery.

CHLS 610. Child Life Internship II. 4 Units.

Blends didactic and experiential learning in order to bridge the gap between child-life theory and the application of child-life principles. Prepares students for work in the field of child life through the principles of clinical course work shared in class. Discusses the clinical requirements recommended by the Association of Child Life Professionals (ACLP) and gives special attention to the standards of clinical practice set forth by the official documents of ACLP.

CHLS 694. Directed Study: Child Life Specialist. 1-4 Units.

Individual study in areas of special interest concerning the pediatric patient and family. May be repeated for credit at the discretion of the faculty.

CHLS 700. Clinical Training. 2 Units.

A child-life practicum designed as an introductory experience for individuals interested in pursuing the child-life profession. Students enroll in an approved hospital site, complete 100-120 hours, and meet with a supervisor who meets ACLP requirements.

CHLS 701. Clinical Training. 6 Units.

Hands-on clinical training experience that provides the student with an opportunity to build on coursework and put theory into practice while working in a variety of hospitals and related settings under the direction of a certified child-life specialist (CCLS). 600 hours required through ACLP.

CHLS 702. Clinical Training. 6 Units.

Hands-on clinical training experience that provides the student with an opportunity to build on coursework and put theory into practice while working in a variety of hospitals and related settings under the direction of a certified child-life specialist (CCLS). 600 hours required through ACLP. Prerequisite: CHLS 608.