



CHILD LIFE SPECIALIST PROFESSION

WHAT IS A CHILD LIFE SPECIALIST?

A child life specialist is a trained professional who seeks to help children and their families through challenging experiences related to healthcare and hospitalization. These practitioners “promote effective coping through play, preparation, education, and self-expression activities and provide guidance and emotional support for families” (Child Life Council). They play roles as educators, caregivers, administrators, and medical practitioners.

Career Details:

Location: Most child life specialists work in pediatric facilities, emergency departments, intensive care units, children’s wards, surgical units, specialized camps, schools, or outpatient units

Salary: Child life specialists in the United States earn average annual salaries between \$36,000 and \$48,000

Responsibilities:

- focus on the individual needs of child and family	- relay supportive information
- advocate for family-centered care	- foster a safe environment for child
- collaborate with medical interdisciplinary team	- coordinate special events/activities for child

REQUIREMENTS

Education:

- Child life specialists must earn a minimum bachelor’s degree with an emphasis on education, psychology, child development, health sciences, or a related field of study. An additional master’s degree may be beneficial.
- Most positions require applicants to obtain a Certified Child Life Specialist accreditation from the Child Life Council (this resource is listed below).

Skills:

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| - adapt quickly to unique situations | - communicate effectively with children and parents |
| - maintain a strong sense of integrity and ethics | - educate patients appropriately |
| - encourage optimum development for children | - exude professional attitude and mindset |
| - support, guide, and care | - maintain self-awareness; know strengths and weaknesses |
| - facilitate cooperation between involved parties | - direct hospital tours and offer resources |

CHILD LIFE CERTIFICATION

Do you think you are well-suited for this career? After successfully completing your bachelor’s degree, you can look into the Child Life Professional Certification Program to advance your skill-set. This program is a rigorous, examination-based certification that requires academic and clinical experience. Download the candidate manual and find out more about the process at www.childlife.org. This Child Life Council website offers information on fees, eligibility, benefits, requirements, and more resources.

PROFESSIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

- To boost your application, consider applying for volunteer work, an internship, or a cooperative learning experience with a child life department in a clinical setting during your undergraduate study time
- Become a member of the Child Life Council to access monthly news archives, models and templates for specialists, diagnosis and medical resources, personal growth charts, and clinical service information
- Ensure you have the academic background, skill-set, and experience to apply for a Child Life Specialist position

RESOURCES

Clemson academic advisors	CLC/Child Life Council (www.childlife.org)	Mayo Clinic (www.amyo.edu)
U.S. News and World Report	GHS Children’s Hospital, Greenville	Common Child Life Internship (through CLC)
Clemson Job Link (for job postings)	Career Builder Specialist Jobs (search child life)	

 Center for CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	Michelin Career Center 3rd Floor, Hendrix Student Center (864) 656-0440 career.clemson.edu	Find us on all major social media @ClemsonCCPD 
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