Child Life Student Programs

Children's Hospital Colorado

Updated Winter 2026

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Children's Hospital Colorado

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Child Life 101:
An Educational Exploration

In hopes of increasing community members' understanding of the child life profession, Children's Hospital Colorado's Child Life Department offers four virtual educational sessions per year. Please join us for insight into common interventions, educational requirements for practicums and internships, certification information and a Q&A period.

March 18
June 17
September 16
November 18
From 6 to 8:00 p.m. MST

All attendees must RSVP at least two days prior to session to:

ChildLife101@childrenscolorado.org

Please note: Those who RSVP will receive a video link within 24 hours of the class.

Practicum Program

As professionals responsible for training and advancing candidates into the field of child life, we want to select students who are the most motivated and committed to this profession. Specifically, we seek practicum students who are educationally well prepared to work with pediatric patients and their families. We expect all students to be working towards child life certification and must be on the way to meeting the Child Life Certification Commission's coursework requirements for eligibility, which can be found at www.childlife.org. Additionally, we give strong preference to applicants who have significant experience working with children, ideally in a healthcare setting. If you are not pursuing child life certification and are looking for a general hospital practicum experience, please do not reach out as we simply are not the right program for you.

Practicum experiences are intended as an introduction to the child life profession and to help prepare you for a future child life internship. Students will have exposure to the role of child life in the pediatric hospital setting, as well as medical terminology, childhood illnesses, injury and treatments. The role of a practicum student is designed to provide first-hand experience and education, primarily through observation. Please be aware that a practicum student is not an intern, and your role will be more basic and introductory in nature, allowing students to shadow staff and provide basic play interventions to patients.

Prerequisites

To apply for a practicum you must:

1. Be enrolled in a college or university.
2. Have at least junior status (at least in the third year) of college or university.
3. Have experience working with healthy children or adolescents. (Hospital volunteer experience is beneficial.)
4. Demonstrate commitment to learning and advancing knowledge of child life in a hospital setting.
5. Complete the application process in full.
6. If accepted, candidate must complete health screening for school, obtain a signed hospital/university contract eight weeks prior to start and complete other Human Resources tasks as assigned. Please note that these requirements due include fees.

Weekly Activities

Practicum students will be in the hospital three days a week over the course of six weeks. Each week will consist of two clinical days and one educational day.

Clinical Days

- Typically, 8-hour days (student will follow preceptor's schedule)
- During their clinical days students will shadow staff, plan, implement and evaluate a variety of recreational activities for socialization, normalization, developmental play and expression of feelings related to the hospital experience.
- Students will have rotations in a variety of settings to ensure a diverse experience. These areas may include Seacrest Studios and a combination of inpatient and outpatient settings. These placements may require students working a variety of hours, not strictly 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Education Days

- 5-hour days
- Students will have learning experiences as a group with a variety of different programs that work as part of the interdisciplinary team with whom child life specialists collaborate. Students will have time to process observations during clinical group supervision with the child life educator.

Final Project

Practicum students plan and organize a comprehensive therapeutic activity (such as a Teddy Bear Clinic or camp programming) towards the end of their placement, to incorporate the many diverse experiences and lessons of their placement. These events may happen on a weekend day, outside of your typical schedule.

Additional Experiences

Other opportunities for experiences outside of the regularly scheduled hours often come up and students are given the option of participating; however, they are not required and they do not impact evaluations.

Before You Arrive

If you are accepted, please note that there are requirements that must be completed prior to your practicum.

- Required readings that will be sent upon acceptance into the practicum program.
- Completion of hospital and university contract at least eight weeks prior to the start date.
- Once accepted, you will receive an email from Human Resources requiring health information and other time sensitive tasks. These must be completed within six weeks of the start date and do have fees associated with them.

Practicum Schedule

Practicum Dates (Summers)

Practicum will begin in early June and run through mid-July.

To apply for a practicum, please complete and compile the following documents. Applications are due the second Friday in January.

- Completed **Practicum application (.doc)**
- Completed **Child Life Work Experience Chart (.doc)**
- An unofficial transcript from each university/college you have attended
- A copy of your current resume
- One letter of recommendation from your academic advisor.
    - Note: This letter should also include the statement: "As the academic advisor, I have received information on the contract from this applicant and am willing to advocate for university support to reach agreement on the contract." If you do not have a current advisor please include a letter from the program providing affiliation, and a letter of recommendation from an academic who can speak to your qualifications for an internship. Please have the person email their letter or recommendation directly to **ChildLife101@childrenscolorado.org**.
- One letter of recommendation from someone who is familiar with your work with children/families. (Note: This should not be from family or friends.) Please have the person email their letter of recommendation directly to **ChildLife101@childrenscolorado.org**.
- A typed response to the following:

    1. A professional statement explaining why you are exploring a practicum at Children's Hospital Colorado.
    2. Please list three goals, each with three objectives, you expect to accomplish during your practicum.
    3. In 100 words or less, what is a child life specialist?

To submit your application, please combine all documents into **one single PDF, in the order listed above,** and email the file to: **ChildLife101@childrenscolorado.org**. Practicum applications are **due the 2nd Friday in January** and candidates will be notified by the 3rd Monday in February.

Applications that do not follow these instructions or are incomplete will not be reviewed.

Internship Program

Children's Hospital Colorado is proud to be an accredited internship program through the Association of Child Life Professionals (ACLP). We adhere to all standards and requirements of accredited programs.

As professionals responsible for training and advancing candidates into the field of child life, we want to select students who are the most motivated and committed to this profession. Specifically, we seek individuals who are educationally well prepared to work with pediatric patients and their families. Meeting the course requirements of the Child Life Certification Commission is a minimum, and the more courses and experiences you have, the better prepared you will be. Additionally, we give strong preference to applicants who have significant experience working with children in a healthcare setting.

While completing an internship at Children's Hospital Colorado, child life students can take advantage of a variety of amenities. Interns have access to the Children's Hospital Colorado Medical Library, Family Resource Center and to the University of Colorado Medical Library.

Vision

We intentionally honor and nurture the emotional being of our patients and families.

Purpose

To provide child life undergraduate and graduate students the opportunity to learn the working aspects of a pediatric setting and the clinical skills necessary in order to prepare them for certification and employment.

Program

The internships at Children's Hospital Colorado are comprised of 16 weeks, 40 hours per week for a total of up to 640 hours. The internships are offered twice per year in the spring and fall.

Goals

By the end of the internship the student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate basic knowledge of human growth and development from birth through young adulthood.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the effects of stress and trauma on children's behavior and development.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of the psychosocial needs of patients and families.
4. Observe and assess children's developmental and/or functional skills and adjustment to healthcare experiences.
5. Demonstrate use of goal- and process-oriented play to help children cope.
6. Identify and implement therapeutic interventions based on assessment.
7. Evaluate outcomes of therapeutic interventions.
8. Demonstrate ability to select, modify and adapt activities, equipment and facilities to meet individual patient and/or group needs.
9. Demonstrate a working understanding of family-centered care.
10. Work effectively with patients, families, staff and community.
11. Demonstrate ability to convey patient information through written documentation and oral presentation.
12. Perform basic administrative tasks, which support the program.

Supervision

Throughout the internship, interns receive and maintain primary supervision from a Certified Child Life Specialist, who works as the child life educator for the department. This supervisor will sign off on internship hours/documentation at the completion of the internship. Interns will meet consistently with the educator and with rotation supervisors on a weekly basis during each rotation as required by the ACLP.

Prerequisites

- All applicants must be enrolled in a college/university program and receiving credits for internship.
- All applicants must have completed a practicum experience.

Child Life Internship Requirements

As required for eligibility for child life certification exam, applicants must complete a minimum of 600 hours of child life clinical experience under the direct supervision of a Certified Child Life Specialist who meets specific qualifications. Preference is given to those applicants working toward a degree in child life, human development and family studies or a related field.

1. Transcripts should reflect coursework in:
    - Child development
    - Hospitalized children
    - Human development/family studies
    - Medical terminology
    - Bereavement/end of life
    - Anatomy and physiology
    - Play

2. The Child Life Department requires that interns entering a pediatric setting have experience with:
    - Children who have been hospitalized
    - Children and families in stressful situations/environments
    - Children with normal growth and development

Additional requirements from Children's Colorado:

- All CLCC requirements must be met
- 100 hours of completed practicum experience
- An ACLP Eligibility Assessment
- ACLP Internship Readiness Application
- Recommendation form from a practicum supervisor

Our Team

Our team consists of a director, managers, supervisors, program coordinators and more than 50 Certified Child Life Specialists (CCLSs). We also have a team of child life activity coordinators who work throughout the program to support our CCLSs, as well asgaming technology specialists, a clinical research coordinator, Seacrest Studios team members, and medical dogs who work as part of the child life team.

As a child life intern, you will have the opportunity to observe and facilitate interventions such as:

- Assessment
- Procedure preparation/support
- Surgical preparation/tours
- Medical and therapeutic play
- Sibling support
- Emotional support for patients and siblings
- Trauma support
- End-of-life/grief support
- Stress and pain management
- Volunteer training and collaboration

Learning Experiences

Students gain information and experience through a wide variety of assignments. The following is a list of core learning experiences included in the internship program:

- Daily journal
- Internship project
- Case study
- Interdisciplinary interviews
- Patient care conferences/staffing/rounds
- Documentation
- Patient assessment
- Program planning
- Preparation
- Volunteer orientation
- Tutorial learning experiences
- Required readings
- Budget learning
- Site visits
- Grand rounds
- Schwartz Center rounds

Amenities

While completing an internship at Children's Colorado, students can take advantage of a variety of amenities, including:

- Free parking
- Employee discounts at the hospital cafeteria
- Shared office space including computer and email access
- Free opportunities for continuing education
- Access to Children's Hospital Colorado Medical Library, Employee Gym, Family Resource Center and to the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center Medical Library

Internship Schedule

Spring Internship Applications (January - May)

- Applications must be emailed by September 4
- Applicants will be notified of internship offer by the first Tuesday of October
- Internship will begin on a Monday in January

Fall Internship Applications (August - December)

- Applications must be emailed by March 13
- Applicants will be notified of internship offer by the first Tuesday in May
- Internship will begin on a Monday in August

To Apply

Complete the ACLP's Internship Readiness Application

All applicants must provide the following information with their ACLP Internship Readiness Application:

- ONE Recommendation Form from a practicum supervisor. This form can be emailed directly to childlife101@childrenscolorado.org. (insert link for recommendation form)

You are welcome to include letters of recommendation in addition to the recommendation form, and they in fact may help us get a deeper sense of you, but they are not required. Please have the person email their letter of recommendation directly to **ChildLife101@childrenscolorado.org**. To submit your application, please email the file to: **ChildLife101@childrenscolorado.org**.

Applications that do not follow these instructions or are incomplete will not be reviewed.

Before You Arrive

If you are accepted, please note that there are requirements that must be completed prior to your internship.

- Required readings that will be sent upon acceptance into the program.
- Proof of professional liability insurance.
- Medical and immunization records.
- Background check and drug screening (fees may be associated with these requirements).
- Completion of hospital and university contract at least eight weeks prior to the start date.
- Once accepted, you will receive an email from Human Resources requiring health information and other time sensitive tasks. These must be completed within six weeks of the start date.

Contact Us

If you have additional questions about our child life student experiences, contact us by email. Please note that we cannot provide information about other educational opportunities, such as art therapy or medical education.

Child Life Student Experience Inquiries

ChildLife101@childrenscolorado.org