

## Child Life: Common Questions and Answers

### 1. How did you become interested in the field of child life?

I began volunteering at a children's hospital and worked with a certified child life specialist (CCLS). Through this experience I was able to loosely observe the child life role and then further researched the profession through visiting the [Association of Child Life Professionals \(ACLP\) website](#). Learning more about the profession paired with my interest in working with children in stressful situations, keen inter/intra-personal skills, and with the additional experiences I had working with children in schools and camp settings, it really solidified the fact that child life was going to be the career for me.

### 2. What is your education background and what are the steps required for certification?

For the most detailed information regarding becoming certified, please visit the ["Becoming Certified" page on the ACLP website](#). Briefly, the ultimate goal is to sit for the child life national certification exam provided by the ACLP after you have completed all necessary requirements (listed below).

1. A bachelor's degree in a related field (master's degree in related fields are more commonly being pursued). Fields of degrees may vary as there are very few Child Life specific degrees offered, but most have a strong foundation in child development.
2. Completed ten courses of related course work deemed appropriate by the ACLP
3. Successfully completed a minimum of 600-hour child life internship (volunteering and a child life practicum are typically prerequisites for internship)

### 3. What inspired you to choose this career?

I realized I wanted a challenging, exciting, and very meaningful career – child life in a nutshell.

### 4. When you are charting to communicate with the healthcare team, what are your goals?

In our chart notes, we are communicating key information about our patient care plans. We include assessment information (how is this child coping and what variables play into their coping); what is our plan going to address and what specific individualized interventions will help meet care goals. Additionally, we include an evaluation of our interactions and plan for follow-up as needed. These notes are essential for communication within our child life department and across disciplines as we aim to foster a team-centered approach to providing comprehensive care.

## 5. What is a typical day for a child life specialist?

Part of the beauty of child life is that you don't have the same day twice. Because of this, child life specialists remain flexible and work to adapt their skills to each unique situation. The days vary depending on the patient population and unit the specialist is assigned to. Generally, the specialist gathers a census of the patients within the unit, or in outpatient, on the schedule. The specialist will continually collaborate with other disciplines regarding patient care, attend rounds, and develop a plan of care based on patient goals and therapeutic needs.

After accessing the census, the specialist will prioritize the day according to patient needs and administrative responsibilities. Some patients on the census may need follow up visits and other patients may be new to the unit who the specialist will meet for the first time. There are many variables that influence how the day is set up, some being: upcoming medical tests/procedures, any new diagnoses, their developmental age and on-going hospital stressors, or on-going challenges, new referrals from the medical team (etc.). Once the day gets going, the specialist continually assesses patient coping and needs, and the day re-shapes and re-shapes as interventions are provided and priorities shift accordingly.

Interventions may include diagnostic teaching, surgical preparation, expressive play activities, medical play, and bereavement support, medication taking techniques, sibling support, or procedural support. It is from there that additional administrative and programming responsibilities are balanced with patient care such as: group programming, activity/play room maintenance, volunteer supervision, student training, attending multidisciplinary and interdepartmental committee meetings, and charting.