

FAQ: Child Life Practicum Program at Oklahoma Children's OU Health

The Child Life Department at Oklahoma Children's OU Health is dedicated to offering quality programs for the education and training of students. We offer two student programs: practicum and internship. Below are frequently asked questions regarding our child life practicum program.

I am graduating soon and I just heard about child life. I am interested in becoming a child life specialist but don't know where to begin?

Please review the information on becoming a child life specialist on the Association of Child Life Professionals' website: www.childlife.org. Complete as much research as possible through the resources available on the website. To become a child life specialist, one has to:

1. Have a minimum of a bachelor's degree in Child Life or a related field such as Family Studies, Psychology, Child Development, etc. The Association of Child Life Professionals requires a minimum of 10 child life-related courses. This includes a required child life course focusing on children in the health care environment and must be taught by a Certified Child Life Specialist. The following applied areas of study must be included in the course: child life documents, scope of practice, family-centered care, impact of illness, injury and health care on patients/families, therapeutic play, and preparation.
2. A student must submit coursework for verification called the Eligibility Assessment through the Association of Child Life Professionals. Please see ACLP website for related costs.
3. Complete a 600+ hour internship under the direct supervision of a Certified Child Life Specialist which usually consists of 12-16 weeks of unpaid clinical experience.
 - o Note: Some hospitals require a practicum to be completed before a student is accepted to their internship program; however, a practicum is not required to become a child life specialist. Applying for clinical internships is competitive – the more varied experience working with children the better.
4. Upon completion of child life coursework and the internship, the student must pass the child life certification exam.

What's the difference between a child life practicum and a child life internship?

The practicum is specifically designed to introduce students to the field of child life and helps students gain experience in the hospital setting. This experience helps in obtaining a child life internship in a competitive profession. Our practicum is a 150-hour experience over the course of 5 weeks observing a Certified Child Life Specialist in his or her day-to-day functions. Our practicum is designed to be primarily observation-based, but students may have the opportunity to demonstrate basic clinical skills – such as normalized play and introduction of services. All child life practicums are unpaid at our hospital.

The internship is a clinical experience under the direct supervision of a Certified Child Life Specialist. This experience is designed so students may continue working on clinical skills in order to become competent as a beginning level child life specialist. Our internship consists of 40-hour weeks for 16+ weeks for a total of 600+ hours over a semester. The internship content is based on competencies set forth in the *Official Documents and Standards of the Association of Child Life Professionals*. All child life internships are unpaid at our hospital.

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When does a student need to begin their practicum?

It is best to begin clinical experiences as soon as possible. Most of the time, this occurs while a student is still enrolled in college courses that may also fulfill requirements for a specific degree program. The practicum is completed prior to an internship. Ideally, a student should start researching possible clinical locations and then start applying to programs his or her sophomore and junior year of college. However, starting early in a student's college years is only a suggestion and not required to become a child life specialist. Most students begin their clinical work while still in school rather than waiting until after graduation. Remember, to complete a practicum at Oklahoma Children's, you must be enrolled at a university or college and completing your practicum hours for course credit.

Do you have housing options for any of your student programs?

No, we do not currently offer housing options for our students but can provide suggestions if desired.

When is the practicum offered?

We offer a practicum three times a year during the spring, summer, and fall semesters. The days a student will participate are flexible according to the student's academic schedule as well as the schedules of the child life specialists.

How many practicum students do you accept to the program during each session?

The number of students accepted varies based on preceptor availability.

Is a practicum required to be accepted to an internship?

Our hospital does not require a practicum to be completed to apply for our internship. However, it is highly recommended.

Can I do both my practicum and internship at Oklahoma Children's OU Health?

We typically recommend and suggest that practicum and internship programs be completed at different hospitals so that a student has multiple learning and training experiences. However, we would accept and consider applications regardless of this suggestion.

What experiences do you look for in choosing a practicum student?

We look at your degree program and courses taken or currently enrolled in that are related to child life (i.e., Child Development, Family Studies, Psychology). We look at relevant & varied experiences working and volunteering with children and families, including well children and children in stressful situations, healthcare settings, and/or programs designed for children with special needs.

Do I have to be affiliated with a college or university to apply for the practicum?

Yes, a student must be affiliated in order to be considered for our student programming. Upon acceptance, our HR department will work with the student's school to have a contract completed upon start date. You must also be enrolled in a class during the course of your practicum in which your hours would be used for course credit. This is frequently an "independent study", "field work", or "internship in the field" course.

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Who does your child life department consist of?

Our child life team consists of 36+ full and part-time Certified Child Life Specialists, Music Therapy, Art Therapy, Child Life Zone and Special Events Coordinator, School Programs Coordinator, Gaming and Technology Specialist, Yoga & Movement Instructor, and our Paws for Purpose program which includes our full-time facility dogs.

For further questions regarding student programs, please contact our program educator at:

ChildLifepracticum@ouhealth.com

Or

ChildLifeinternship@ouhealth.com