

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

The Child Life Department at Oklahoma Children's Hospital at 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 that 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.
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 a specific number of 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. All child life practicums are unpaid.

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.

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,

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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.

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 needed.

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 require a practicum to be completed in order to be accepted to our internship program.

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

We highly recommend and suggest that practicum and internship programs be completed at different hospitals so that a student has multiple learning and training experiences. At Oklahoma Children's Hospital at OU Health, we will not accept an internship application from a student that has completed a practicum here.

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 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?

No. A contract between a student's university and OU Health must be agreed upon and signed before a student is cleared to begin the program. If a student is not affiliated, the student is responsible for completing all requirements provided by the hospital at the time of practicum acceptance.

Who does your child life department consist of?

Our child life team consists of 23 full and part-time Certified Child Life Specialists, Music Therapy, Art Therapy, Child Life Zone and Special Events Coordinator, School Programs Coordinator, and our Paws for Purpose program which includes four full-time facility dogs.

For further questions regarding student programs, please contact:
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