

Child Life Specialist:

Advantages- Good salary and does not require graduate school.

Disadvantages: EXTREMELY competitive to secure the required internship for certification. Will probably have to travel out of state to get an internship, as there are only 4 internships offered in Colorado each year.

Advising for Child Life

- If you are interested in pursuing Child Life as a career, please contact Dr. Lisa Hagan for advising lkindleb@msudenver.edu

To get a Certification in Child Life

1) Earn a bachelor's degree (any major is fine)

Human Development and Family Studies Major Recommended

Minor recommendations include Pre-Healthcare, Biology, or Individualized Degree Program

2) Complete 10 Child Life required courses

- If you are a Human Development and Family Studies major, then the 10 required courses can all be completed as part of your major.

Prerequisite Courses

- PSY 1001 Introductory Psychology (required before you take any Psychology class)
- PSY 2310 Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences (required before you take the research methods course).

10 Required Child Life Courses

- Two Child Development courses
 - Child Development
 - Offered online Fall, Spring, and Summer
 - Adolescent Development
 - Offered online Fall, Spring, and Summer
- Family Systems Course
 - PSY 3580 (Development in the Family Context)
 - Offered online Fall and Spring
- Death/Dying course
 - PSY 2270 (Death, Dying, and Grieving)
 - Offered online Fall, Spring, and Summer
- Research Methods Course
 - PSY 3010 Research Methods
 - Offered online Fall, Spring, and Summer
- Child Life Specialist Course
 - PSY 3490 (Child Life Theory and Practice)
 - Offered online Fall

- Play Course
 - PSY 3460 (Psychology of Play)
 - Offered online Fall and Spring
- Three additional courses
 - PSY 2210 (Psychology of Human Development)
 - PSY 3340 (Cognitive Development and Learning)
 - PSY 3400 (Child Psychopathology)

3) 150-hour Child Life Practicum

- While it is not “required” to do a practicum, students who get an internship (which is required) **ALL** do practicums. In fact, many students do two practicums. The good news is that you will get course credit for doing a Child Life practicum in the form of signing up for the Internship in Psychology course. Children’s Hospital, the leading Child Life hospital in the nation, accepts 6 students a summer for a 6-week practicum. Last summer, 5 of those students came from out of state but the one in-state student was from MSU! You apply for the practicum in January for the following summer and will need a recommendation letter from your advisor (which will be Dr. Hagan). I would apply to a handful of practicums as they are competitive to get into.

4) Complete a 600-Hour Child Life Clinical Internship

- Once you complete the unpaid Child Life Internship, you are considered a Child Life Specialist. This 600-hour internship is completed in 3-4 months. It is VERY competitive to get an internship! Students who get internships have the following:
 - 4.0 GPA or as close as possible!
 - Volunteer hours with kids both inside and outside of a hospital setting (see below for more information).
 - 1 or 2 Child Life Practicums
 - An outgoing and welcoming personality, as you will need to talk to dozens of patients and their parents a day.
 - Some background in the natural sciences. As Child Life Specialists work in hospitals, it is important that they understand medical terminology, anatomy and physiology, and hospital ethics. To fill these requirements, students often minor in pre-health care or even create their own minor (Individualized Degree Program) that is tailored to taking the best courses to prepare for a career in child life.

Additional information can be found at <https://www.childlife.org/> under the tab Certification. The following excerpt below is from that certification page.

Prior to applying to child life practicum and internship, where can I gain experience?

Due to the competitive nature of the field, many students choose to diversify their applications with paid and unpaid experiences. There are many different areas where you can gain volunteer experience, some examples are:

- *Your local children's hospital*
- *Daycare*
- *Nannying*
- *After-school program*
- *Summer camps*

The common child life internship application asks you to list your experiences working with children/families in healthcare settings, in stressful situations, and with well children and/or families. Consider this when deciding where to gain experience. Experiences should be diverse (e.g. different settings, age groups, your role, etc.) as well as thorough in the amount of time spent. For instance, many different short-term experiences would reflect diversity, but not necessarily a large amount of time that would allow you to gain a deep understanding of the children and families with whom you worked.