



Academic Eligibility Requirements *updated October 1, 2020*

Beginning in 2019, applicants must use one of the following options to establish eligibility for the Child Life Professional Certification Exam. **Please note that in addition to these academic requirements, applicants must also complete clinical training as specified in the Candidate Manual.**

Option 1:

1. Bachelor's degree in any field of study

-AND-

2. Coursework: must successfully complete 10 college/university courses as follows:

- 1) Child life course taught by a CCLS
- 2) A minimum of 2 child development courses that cover ages birth -18
- 3) Family systems course
- 4) Play course
- 5) Loss/bereavement or death/dying course
- 6) Research course
- 7) 3 additional courses in related content areas

-OR-

Option 2:

Degree from an ACLP-Endorsed Academic Program (an eligibility assessment must still be completed)

*Required Coursework Details

- For each of the 10 required courses, it is recommended that students take a 3-credit course or the equivalent to have an appropriate depth of instruction.
- A minimum of one full course must be completed for each of the required areas of study. (A minimum of two courses are required for the child development requirement.)
- In order for a course to count, the required content must be the primary focus.
- All points within the Required Content section of each course must be covered within the course. Applicants may not use the same course to meet 2 or more of these requirements.
- Applicants are required to submit university-generated course descriptions when applying for an Eligibility Assessment.
- Applicants must be prepared to provide university-generated syllabi if requested.
- Due to the limited involvement of the instructor in the curriculum being studied and uncertainty about whether it was equivalent to a traditional course, independent study courses are generally not accepted to fulfill the course work requirements needed to establish eligibility for the certification exam.

1. Child Life

Required Child Life Content:

- A minimum of 3 credit hours or unit equivalency is recommended.
- There are 6 required areas of study that must be covered in this course.
- **All 6 areas must be addressed.**
- **More than 1 course may be needed to fulfill this requirement.**
- **The following content must be taught by a Certified Child Life Specialist® (CCLS) who meets the requirements below.**

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Official Documents of ACLP/CLCC | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Centered Care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scope of Practice | <input type="checkbox"/> Therapeutic Play |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Impact of Illness | <input type="checkbox"/> Preparation |

Instructor Requirements:

- Hold/maintain the CCLS credential throughout the period of instruction
- A minimum of 4,000 hours of paid child life clinical experience OR a minimum of two years of experience teaching child life subject matter*
- Maintains knowledge of the Child Life Code of Ethics and the *Official Documents of the Association of Child Life Professionals*
- Pursue training relevant to adult learning styles and evidence-based teaching methodology

**CCLS must be able to demonstrate that the two years of teaching experience was completed prior to 2022. Beginning in 2022, those without prior teaching experiences who wish to initiate a child life course will only be considered qualified if they have a minimum of 4,000 hours of paid child life clinical experience*

2. Child Development:

Required Content:

- Typical child growth and development including theoretical content for children and adolescents (birth - 18 years old)

Required Number of Courses:

- At least two courses that focus curriculum on typical growth and development (not atypical) and cumulatively cover child development from birth to 18 years.
- A minimum of 3 credit hours or unit equivalency for each course is recommended.

Example 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ One course on children Birth – 8 (early childhood) <p style="text-align: center;">-AND-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ One course on children 9-18 (middle childhood and adolescence)
Example 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ One course on early childhood (birth-8 years), <p style="text-align: center;">-AND-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ One course on middle childhood (9-12 years), <p style="text-align: center;">-AND-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ One course on adolescent (13-18 years).
Example 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ One course on development birth – 18 <p style="text-align: center;">-AND-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ One course on infant, school age, or adolescent development
Example 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Two courses on development birth – 18 (Not Recommended)

Clarifications:

- More than 2 courses may be needed to fulfill this requirement.
- If any portion of this age span is not covered, additional courses must be taken.
- Course titles must contain the words “child” (infant, toddler, middle, latent, adolescent) and “development” and indicate the age range covered by the course. Applicants submitting courses that do not follow this scheme may be required to submit additional information such as course syllabi.
- Courses covering the lifespan of development are not accepted due to the limited amount of time and content allocated for children birth–18 years old.
- Courses focusing on adults or seniors are not accepted.

3. Family Systems:

Required Content:

- Content must focus on a systems approach to understanding families (e.g. an ecological approach or Family Systems Theory)

Required Number of Courses:

- One course is required
- A minimum of 3 credit hours or unit equivalency is recommended

Recommended Components:

- Historical and contemporary theories related to family structure and functions
- Family dynamics including broader societal perspectives of diversity and cultural variance
- Family relationships and the dynamics of family life
- Adaptations in family structure and interaction patterns during times of transition
- Adult-child interactions and family roles
- Exploration of current research and theory as it applies to family systems

4. Play:

Required Content:

This course must focus on the therapeutic aspects and/or learning objectives of play in infants, children, youth, and young adults.

Required Number of Courses:

- One course is required
- A minimum of 3 credit hours or unit equivalency is recommended

Recommended Components:

- Classical and contemporary theories on play
- Play as an essential element for children's growth, development, and learning
- Influence of play environments on children's play

Acceptable Curricula:

- Observing, assessing, and using play to make judgments about children's learning
- Play as the primary vehicle and indicator of physical, intellectual, social, and emotional development of children
- Play principles and values
- Structuring therapeutic play sessions
- Creativity and play
- Guidance of play
- Play, curriculum and program development
- Art, music, and play for early childhood education*
- Concepts of leisure, play and recreation*

*Courses that cover all stages of childhood (birth to 18) and non-recreational therapy courses are preferred.

Coursework NOT Accepted:

Courses from the college/university department of physical education are NOT accepted.

5. Loss/Bereavement or Death/Dying:

Required Content:

- Foundations of loss, bereavement, and/or death/dying

Required Number of Courses:

- One course is required
- A minimum of 3 credit hours or unit equivalency is recommended

Recommended Components:

- Historical, current, cultural, spiritual, and religious perspectives
- Topics including ambiguous loss, transitions, palliative care, self-awareness & self-care
- Inclusion of content focused on impacts to children and families is recommended
- Courses on aging are not accepted

6. Research:

Required Content:

- Basic research methods, statistics, and outcomes that apply to clinical practice and program review.

Required Number of Courses:

- One course is required
- A minimum of 3 credit hours or unit equivalency is recommended

Recommended Components:

- Foundational research literacy and research ethics
- Introductory approaches to research – quantitative, qualitative, action research, and analysis
- Introduction to knowledge translation and dissemination of research outcomes impacting clinical practice program review
- Introduction to the integral role of research in evidenced-based practice.
- Research processes of data collection, evaluation, literature review, knowledge translation

Please note: Courses with “research” in the title will be accepted.

7. Additional Coursework:

Required Content:

- Child life or a closely related subject

Required Number of Courses:

- Three courses are required
- A minimum of 3 credit hours or unit equivalency per course is recommended

Recommended Courses: It is highly recommended that applicants complete these courses in some of the following content areas:

- Exploring Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion of Children and Families*
- Ethics
- Human Anatomy and Physiology
- Medical Terminology

*Please note this does not change any of the current requirements. It simply reminds potential candidates that diversity, equity, and inclusion is something we recommend. We hope this encouragement is met with excitement and viewed as another way we are highlighting the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the child life profession.

Additional Coursework Options: Applicants who do not complete additional course work in the areas listed above will be required to take three courses from one or more of the following college/university departments:

- Child Life
- Child Development
- Counseling
- Expressive Therapies (only courses that cover the therapeutic applications of play, music, dance, and art will be accepted; fine arts courses are NOT accepted)
- Family Development
- Family Dynamics
- Human Development
- Psychology
- Therapeutic Recreation

Coursework Options Requiring a Syllabus: Courses from the following areas of study or departments will be accepted only if the course content (as demonstrated by the course syllabus) is closely related to child life.

- Sociology
- Social Work
- Nursing
- Early Childhood Education
- Special Education
- Human Services
- Marriage and Family Therapy
- Allied Health
- Family Studies

Coursework NOT Accepted:

- Courses in Recreation Administration