



Child Life Professional Certification Program Survey Results

Child Life Certifying Committee

Child Life Council

December 2011





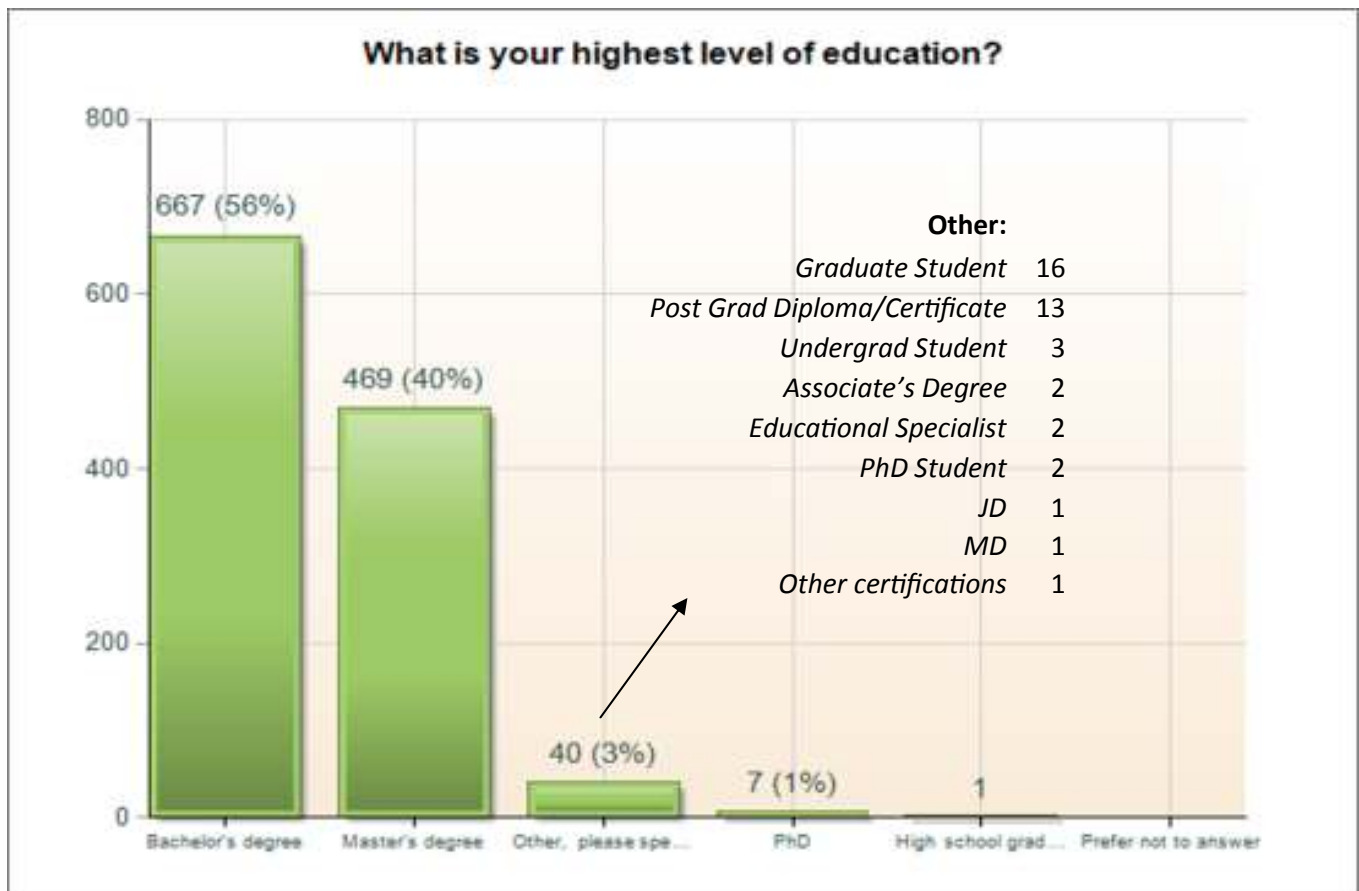
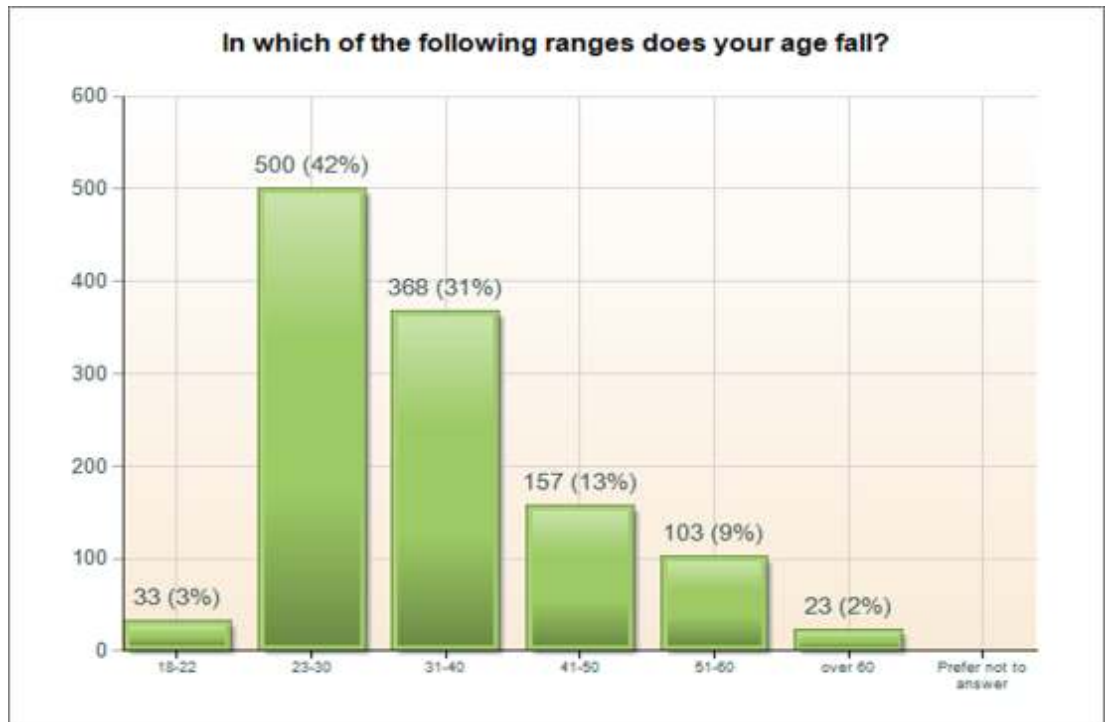
Demographic Information

The survey was sent to over 5,000 individuals in the certification database including current CCLSs, lapsed or inactive credential holders, applicants who are not yet certified, and others who have expressed an interest in certification.

More than 75% of those who responded to the survey were 40 years old or younger.

Respondents identified their race in each of seven categories with over 90% selecting Caucasian.

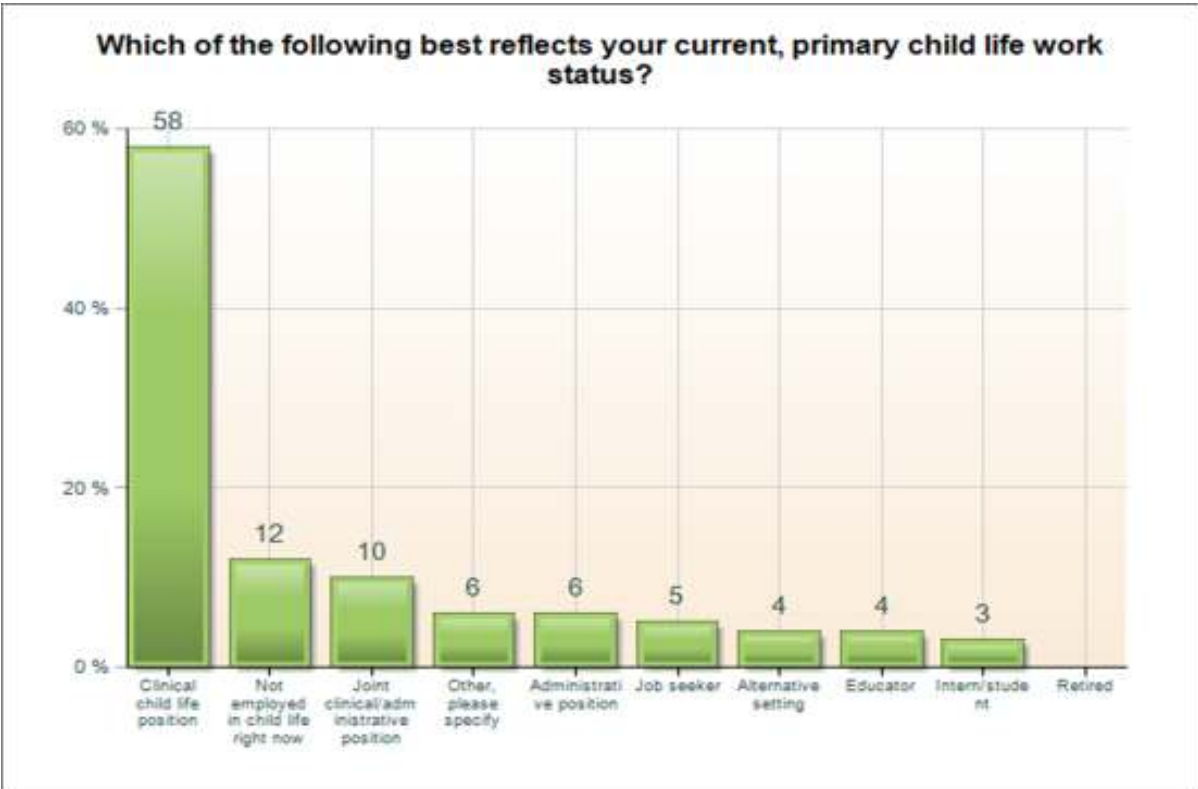
Over half of respondents indicated that a bachelor's degree was their highest level of education.





Work Status

Just over 30% of respondents reporting having more than 10 years of child life work experience. Over half of respondents are primarily clinicians; adding those who have both clinical and administrative duties, the percentage rises to nearly 70%.

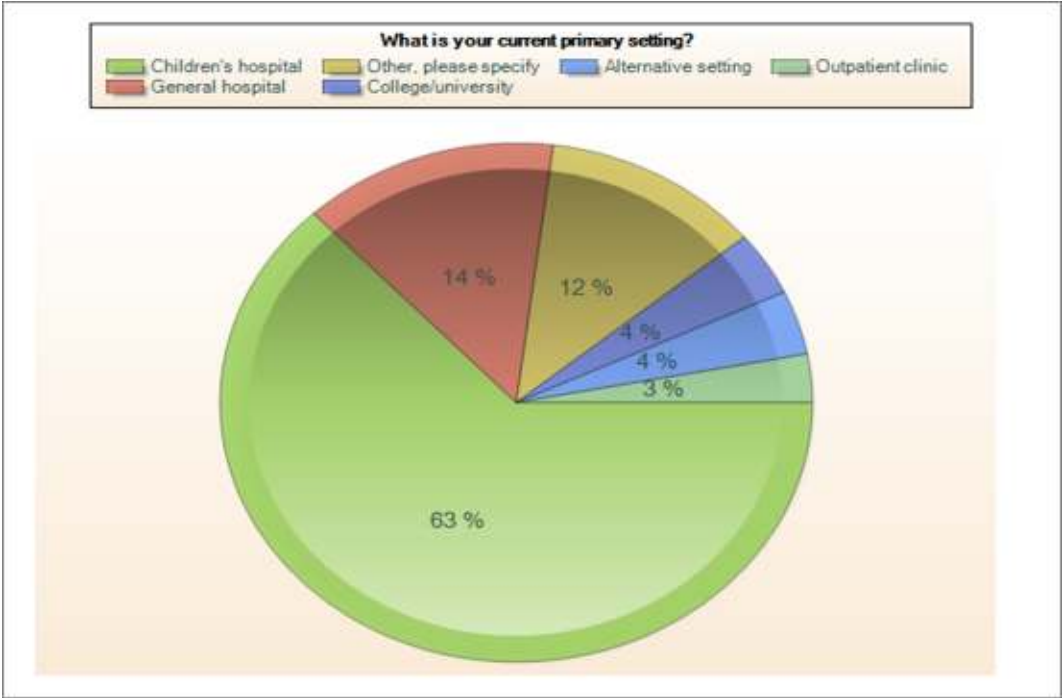




Work Environment

By a significant margin, the majority of respondents work in children's hospitals.

The size of respondent's programs (based on the number of full-time child life employees) was fairly evenly distributed, and the percentage of programs with three or fewer employees was nearly equal to the number of the largest programs (over 15 employees).



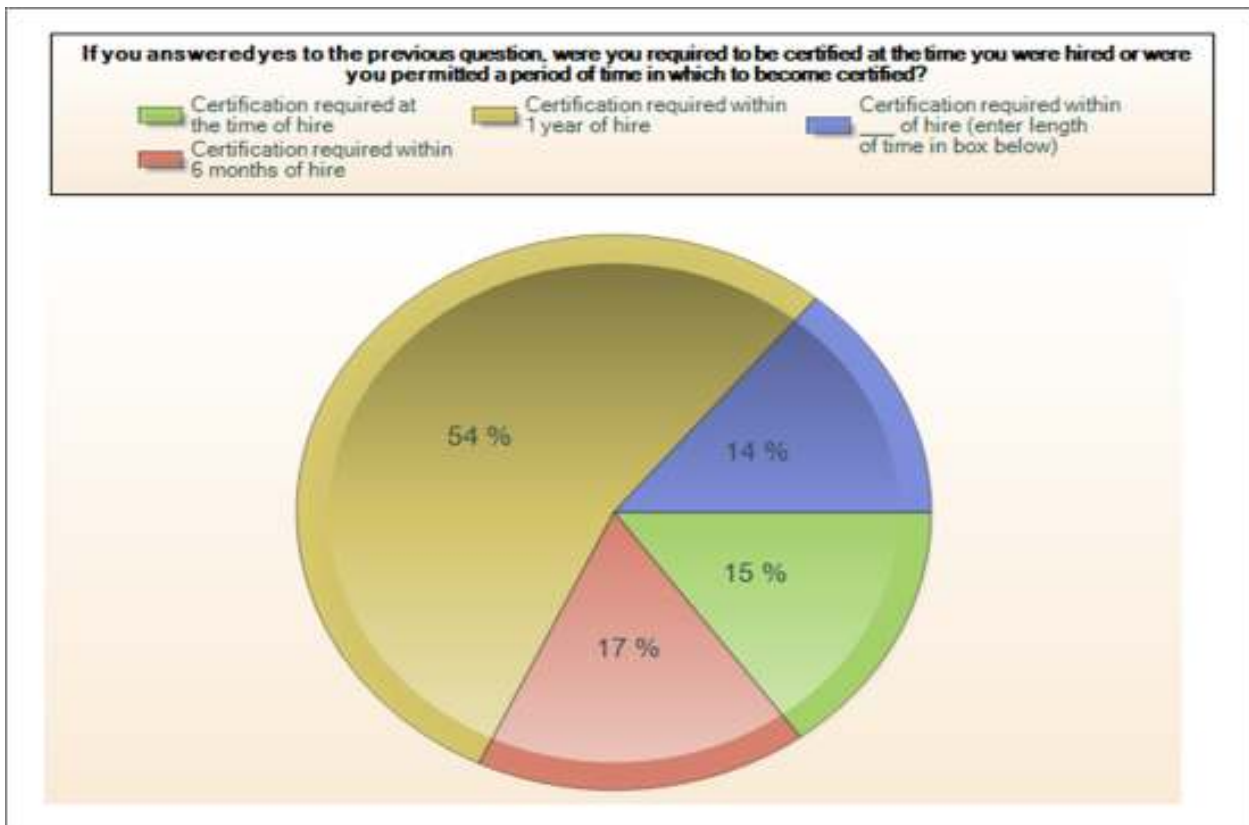
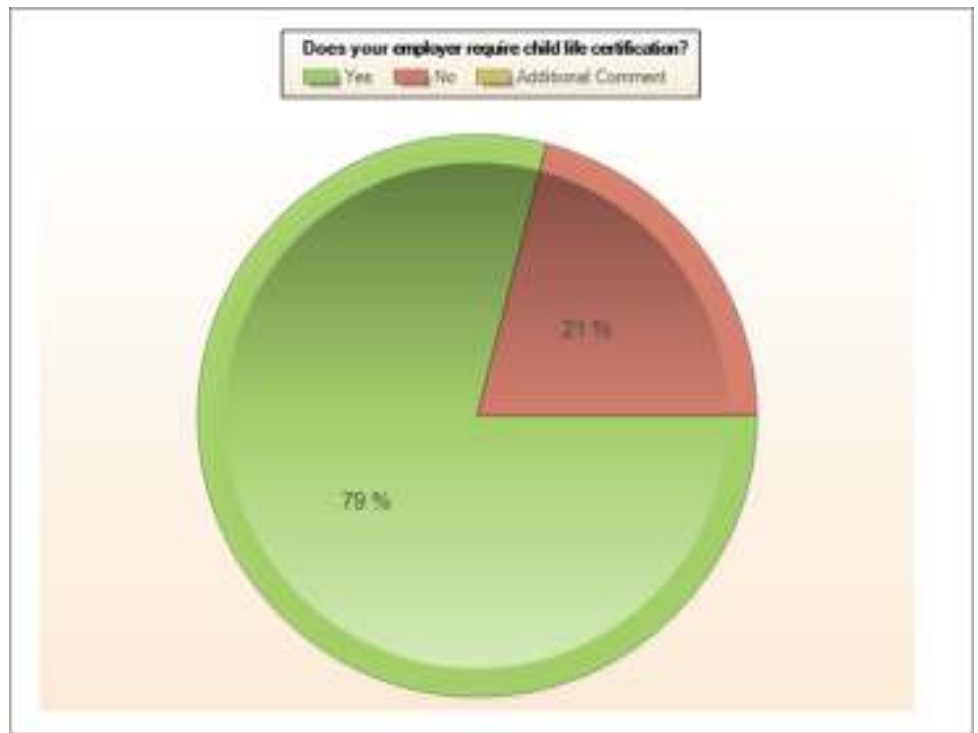


Workplace Certification Requirements

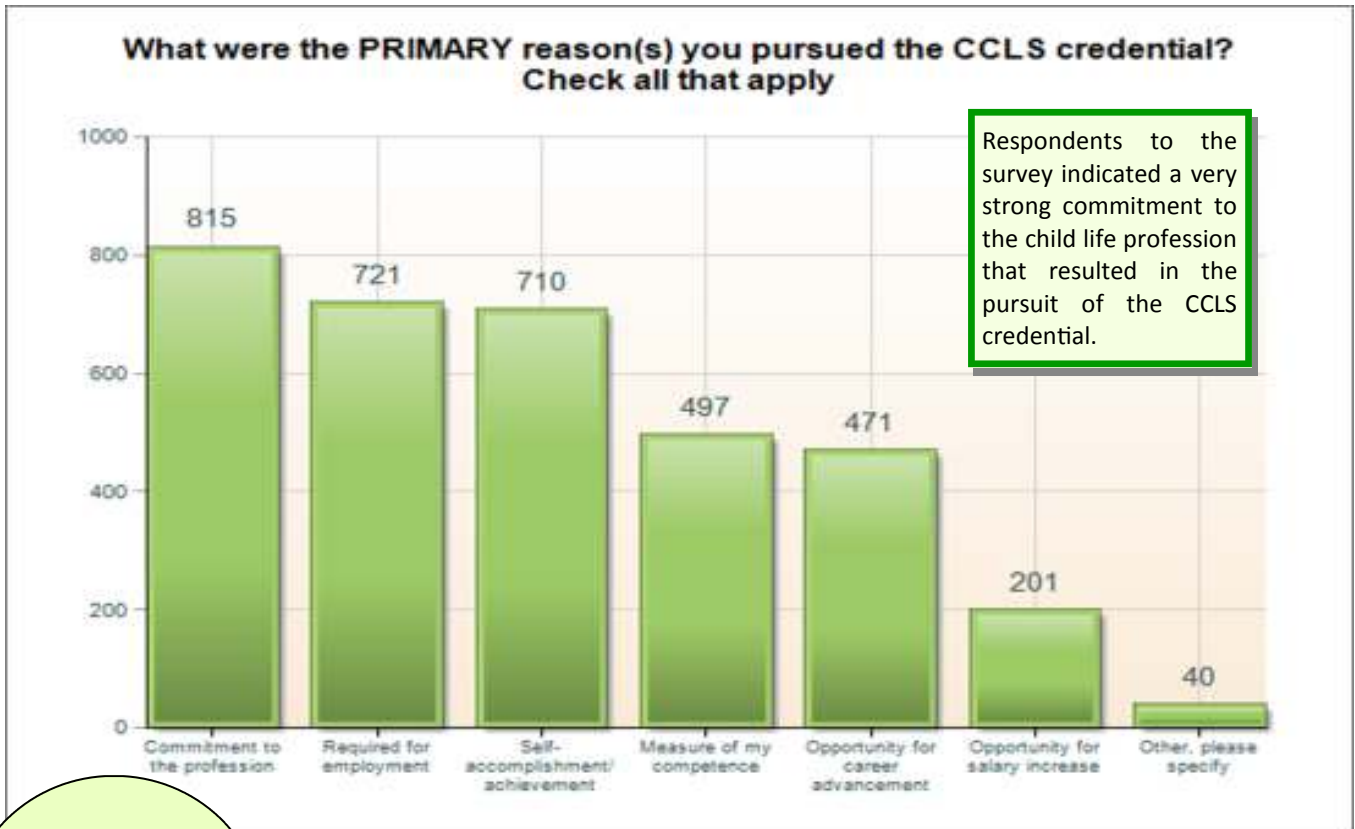
Nearly 80% of those who responded reported that their employer requires child life certification, and an additional small percentage indicated that although it is not required it is strongly encouraged or preferred.

A very small number of respondents indicated that their employer is unaware of the Child Life Professional Certification Program.

Of the respondents whose employers require certification, over half require that child life employees are certified within one year of their hire. Fifteen percent were required to be certified at the time of hire, and 17% had to have the credential after 6 months of employment. Of the remaining percentage, the vast majority were given a longer period in which to obtain the credential. Two respondents indicated that they were permitted fewer than 6 months to become certified.

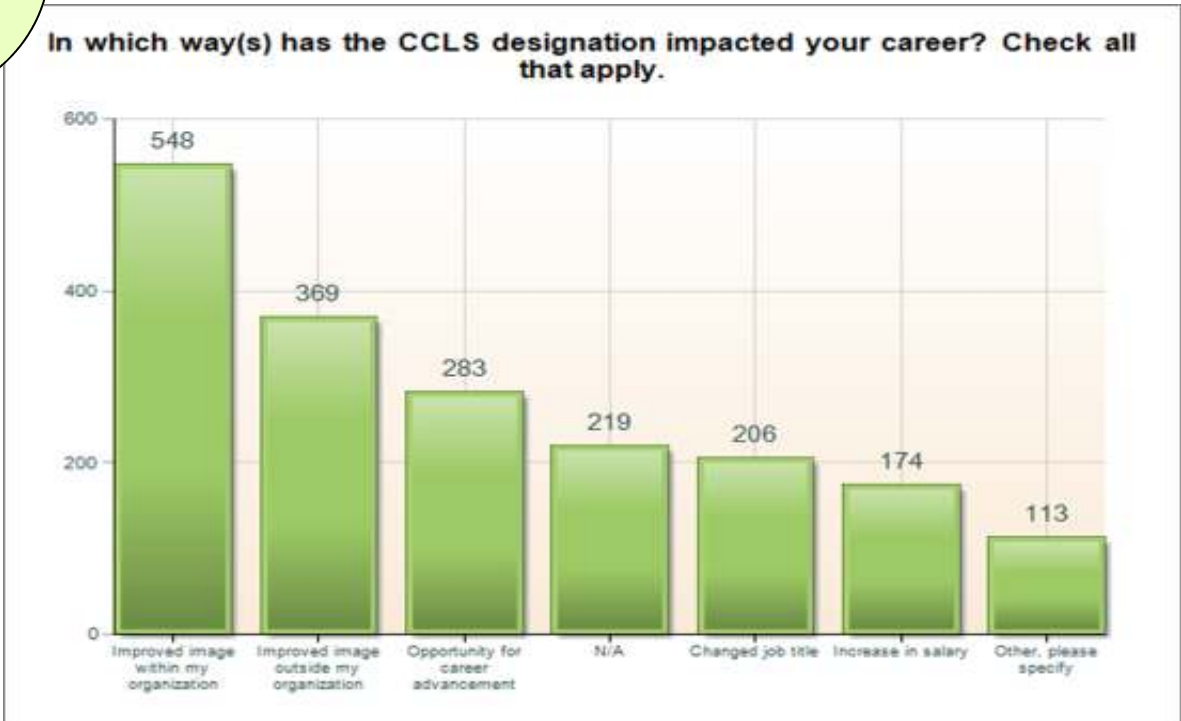


Why do individuals pursue certification? How does it impact their career?



“The title means nothing without the certification to back it up.”

While many indicated that holding the credential has improved how they are viewed as a professional both within and outside their organization, far fewer indicated that certification made a tangible impact in the form of advancement or increased salary.



The Child Life Professional Certification Examination

Eligibility

Eighty-five percent of respondents felt that the eligibility requirements provide adequate preparation for the exam and actual clinical practice

For about one third of respondents, the survey was their introduction to upcoming changes to the eligibility requirements.

We received 19 comments specific to the upcoming change to the clinical experience requirement (no longer allowing paid work experience as a means to satisfy the requirement). Of these, 15 disagreed with the policy change.

Eighty-five respondents commented on the upcoming change to the course work requirement (requiring a child life course taught by a CCLS), of these, 54 indicated disagreement with the change.

Another 97 individuals indicated that a change should occur in one or more of the eligibility requirements. Of these, 67 expressed a wish to change one of the academic requirements (degree or coursework). The remaining 30 commenters preferred a change to the clinical experience requirement.

We received a large number of comments suggesting that many respondents felt that the eligibility requirements should be more challenging.

Preparing for the exam

A frequently repeated comment was that standardization of preparation is needed. Many individuals stressed that there is too much variance in the academic and clinical training of candidates.

At right is a table showing the study materials that respondents indicated as the most useful in preparation for the certification exam. There was a strong preference for practice tests; comments citing them were included in both categories where CLC provides sample tests—the CLC Study Guide and the online practice test through our test administration vendor.

“Starting early enough to have ample time to study”

“RELAX!”

“Prayer”

“Good night’s sleep, good breakfast”

Area of study	Should be required	Should NOT be required	Undecided
Child Life	82%	10%	8%
Child Development	99%	1%	0%
Family Development	89%	4%	7%
Family Dynamics	85%	6%	9%
Psychology	80%	9%	11%
Counseling	51%	26%	23%
Sociology	42%	31%	27%
Expressive Therapies	63%	20%	18%
Death and Dying	91%	5%	4%
Biomedical Ethics	52%	24%	23%
Cultural Diversity	85%	9%	6%
Anatomy & Physiology	57%	25%	18%
Medical Terminology	77%	13%	10%
Other	26%	13%	61%

The table above shows the percentages of respondents who thought the listed areas of study should be required in order to establish eligibility for the certification exam. The highest of these were:

1. child development (99%)
2. death and dying (91%)
3. family development (89%)
4. family dynamics (85%)
5. cultural diversity (85%)
6. child life (82%).

Study Material

Study Material	Number
CLC Study Guide*	304
Recommended References	190
Online Practice Test*	172
Study Group/Peers	104
Clinical Experience	91
Coursework/Professor/Advisor	68
Studying Theory/theorists	55
Flashcards	51
Clinical Supervisor	14
General test-taking strategies	13
Non-CLC study materials	12

*includes instances where respondent indicated “practice tests”

Exam Process and Content

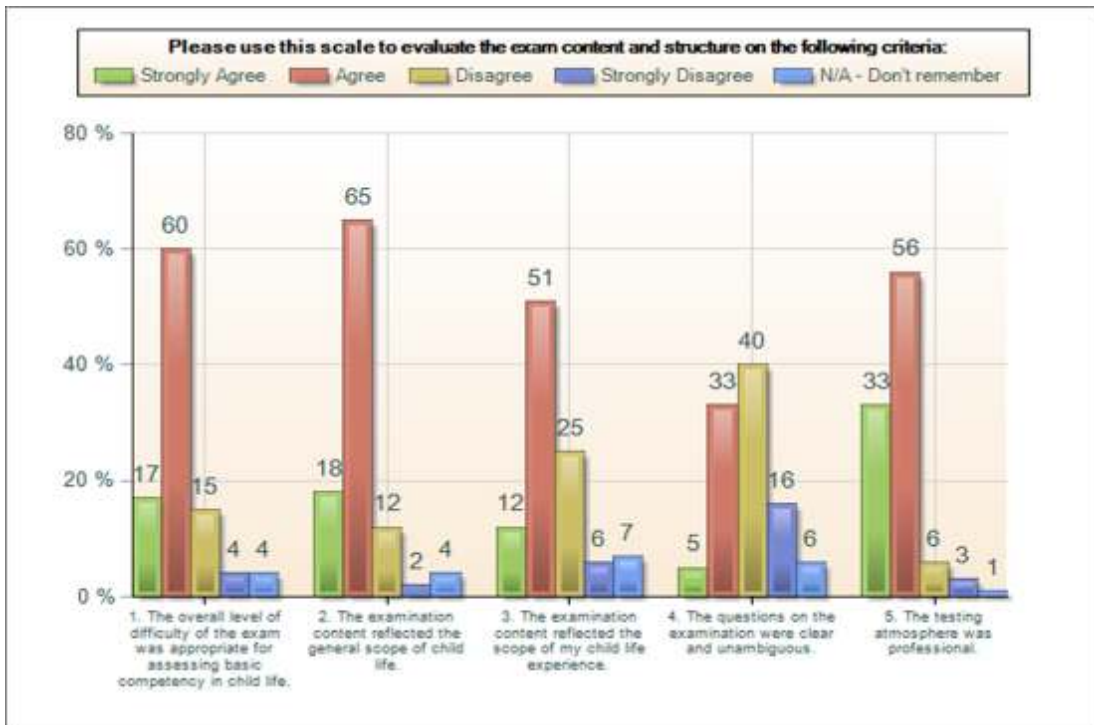
Although many commented that the exam was challenging, 91% of respondents agreed that the application/examination process is valid and fair.

The survey asked individuals to evaluate the content and structure of the exam; in 4 of the 5 categories, respondents indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed with the questions posed.

Their responses signified that the exam content is appropriate; reflected both the general scope of

practice and their own experiences; and that the testing environment was professional. There was less agreement about the clarity of examination questions. Only 38% agreed or strongly agreed that questions were clear and unambiguous. However, many individuals noted that their response was based on their experience taking the exam many years ago.

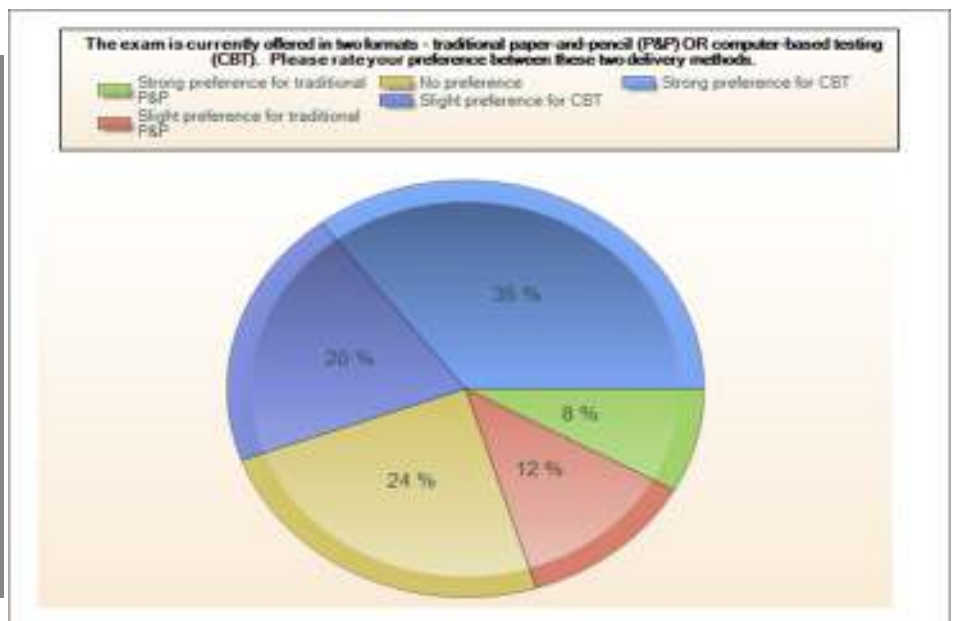
“It seems like the questions have gotten better since the time I took the test in talking with my past interns that have taken it.”



We asked those who are planning to take an upcoming exam to rate their preference for the method of administration—paper-and-pencil vs. computer-based.

Only 20% expressed a preference for the traditional (paper-and-pencil) method.

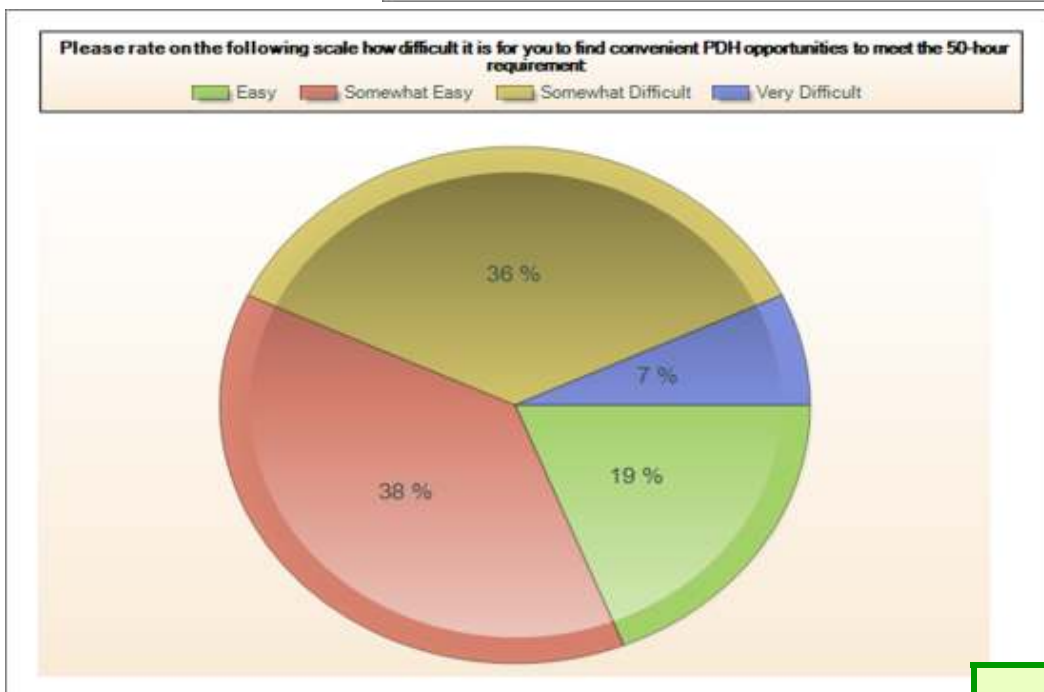
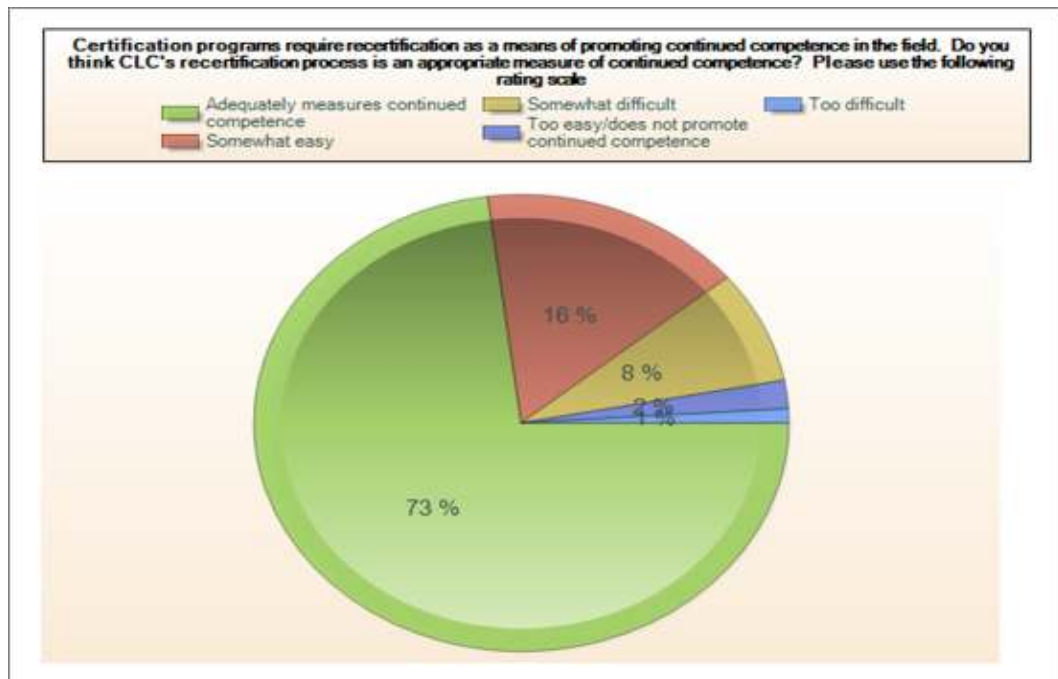
Several respondents asked the reason for the additional fee charged by CLC for computer-based exam administrations. This is due to the increased fees charged by our test administration vendor for the computer-based method. Providing the exam at over 300 testing centers worldwide is a resource-intensive endeavor.



Recertification

Most respondents indicated that the current recertification process is an adequate measure of continued competence. Of those who chose different answers, twice the number thought the process was easier than it should be (18%) than those who felt it is too hard (9%).

Over half of those responding noted that meeting the 50-hour Professional Development Hour (PDH) requirement was easy or somewhat easy.



The chart below shows the percentage of individuals who are able to find with ease the various types of professional development activities.

There were many positive comments regarding the webinars offered by CLC as well as requests to increase their availability.

The survey asked if all three of the domains of the Exam Content Outline were relevant to the individual's personal practice; 95% agreed that they are.

Type of Professional Development Activity	%
CLC Conference	65
Other CL related conferences	54
Grand rounds	55
Inservices	69
College/university classes	26
Online sessions	46
Other	12

When providing comments about the availability of professional development activities that align with each of the three Exam Content Outline domains, respondents were divided roughly equally with respect to which domain was the most difficult to find covered; intervention and professional responsibility were tied and assessment led by 10%.



Certification Fees

Seventy-three percent of respondents felt that CLC's certification fees are comparable to those of similar professions.

However, 40% do not feel the value of the CCLS credential merits the fees that are paid.

Multiple comments indicated that individuals expected an increase in salary as a result of attaining certification and were disappointed that this was not the case.

Others indicated that if certification were not required by their employer, there would be no reason to maintain the credential.

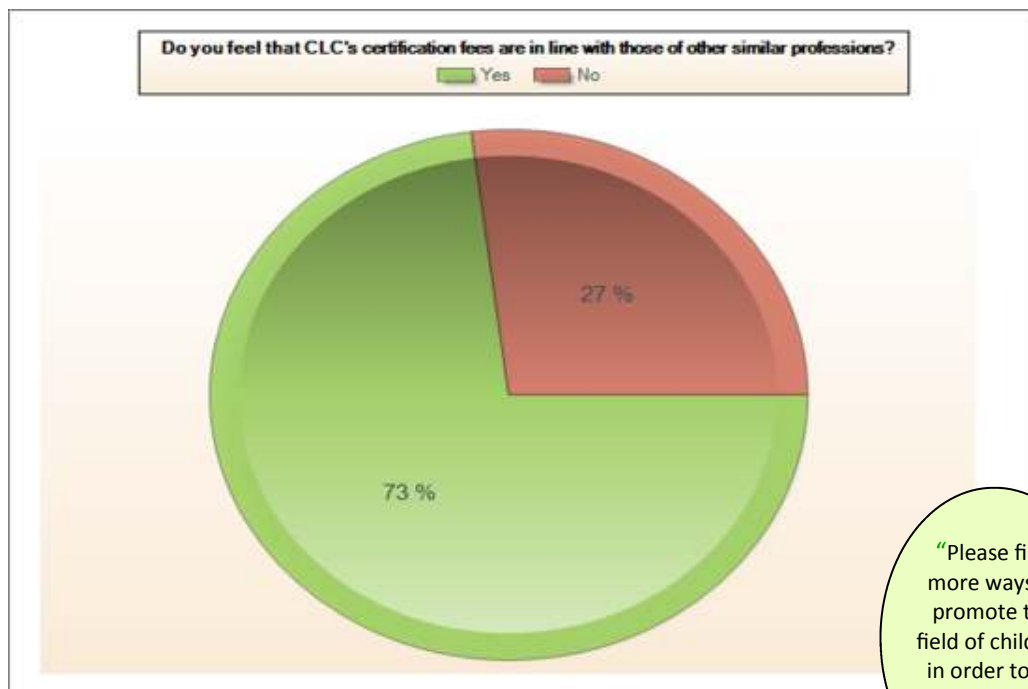
On the other hand, many affirmative and complimentary remarks regarding the value of being a Certified Child Life Specialist were also received.

Of note is the number of comments from individuals who do not understand what the certification fees provide; this was particularly true of the annual Certification Maintenance Fee.

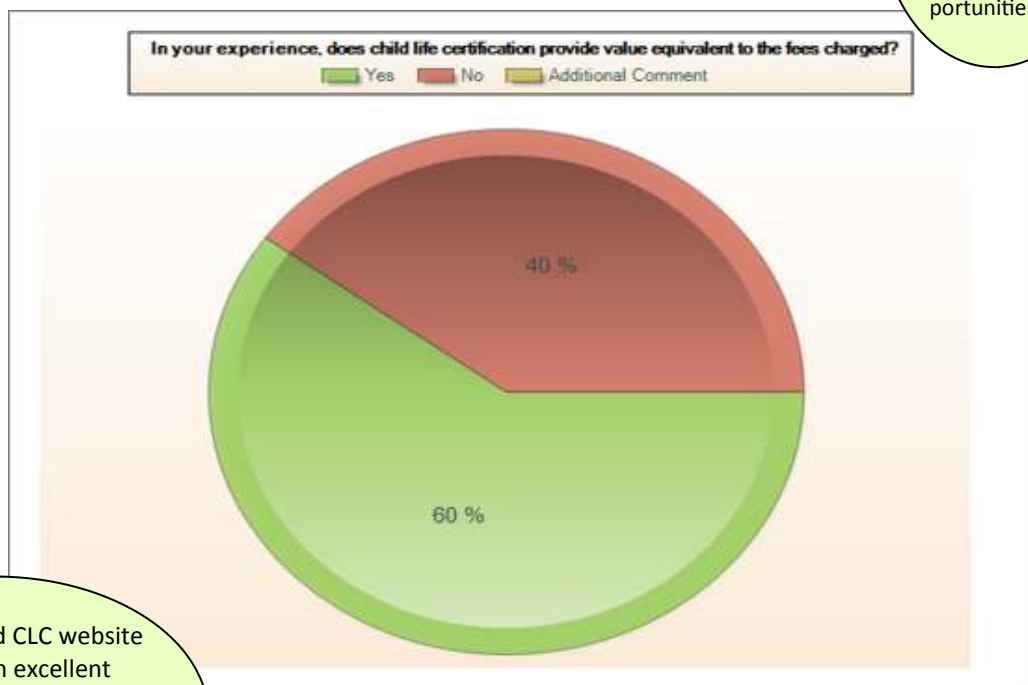
Respondents offered a wealth of suggestions for improving the value of certification. These

were categorized and tabulated. Below is a list of the ten most often suggested, in order of frequency:

1. Increase public awareness of child life profession
2. Standardize clinical and/or



"Please find more ways to promote the field of child life in order to increase job opportunities.."



"The improved CLC website has been an excellent source of information. Please continue to improve it as new technology becomes available"

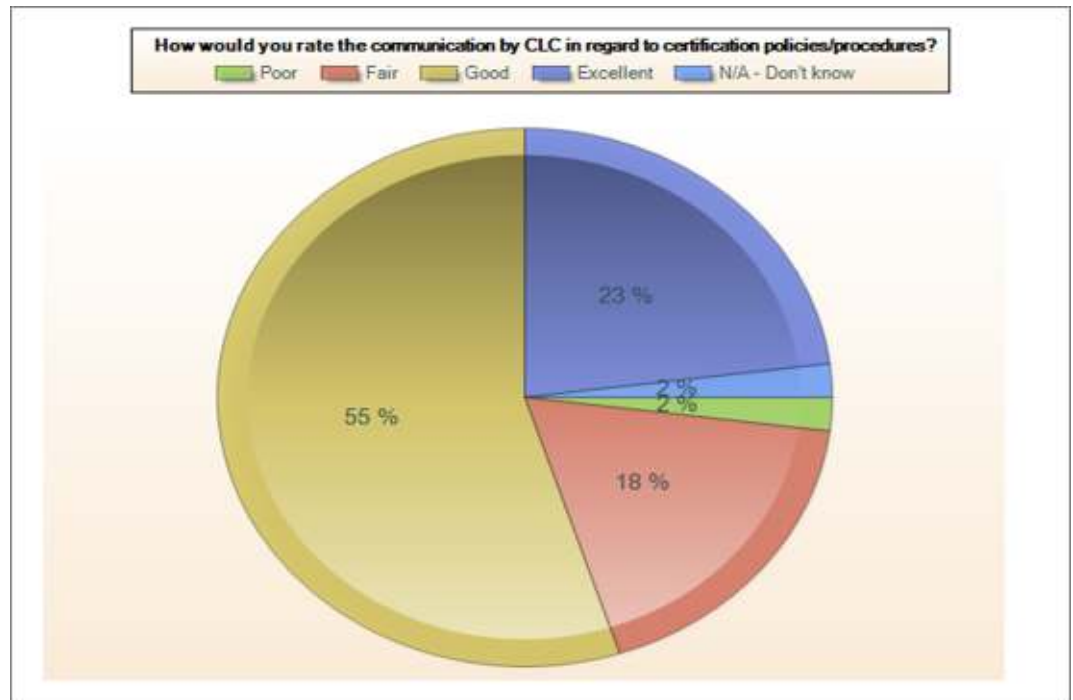
3. Increase child life salaries
4. Increase the number of PDHs offered; provide assistance in finding PDHs
5. Advocate for hospitals to require certification and provide financial reimbursement for the expense
6. Pursue state licensure
7. Lower certification fees
8. Conduct research about the benefits of child life
9. Nothing! Certification is already valuable
10. Audit child life programs and/or practitioners for adherence to best practices

Communication

Seventy-eight percent of respondents rated CLC's efforts to communicate certification policies and procedures as either good or excellent.

The vast majority (83%) reported that the CLC website is their primary source of certification information with direct contact with CLC staff in second place with 10% of the votes.

When asked how we can improve our communication efforts, respondents encouraged us to use email notifications and make improvements to the website. Many felt that the website could be made more user-friendly.



Recommendations

Respondents were given the opportunity to air any other comments or suggestions.

A surprising number of comments were made that indicated a misunderstanding of certification policies. Clearly there is a need to improve communication even though so many respondents approved of communication efforts. There also still exists confusion regarding certification and other CLC programs which are distinct from the certification program.

These comments will be forwarded to the conference and membership programs' staff.

Of the 200+ comments received related specifically to the certification program, about one-quarter were notes of appreciation for which we are very grateful!

About 10% of the comments related to professional development hours and requests for assistance in meeting the

"I would like better guidelines for what is an acceptable PDH."

requirements. Many felt that the types of activities accepted should be expanded to include things like presenting and supervising interns.

"Not quite sure what the maintenance fees are for."

Interestingly there were many comments that directly contradicted those from others.

Some thought it is too hard to become certified and others indicated that is too easy.

"In today's world of cutbacks, how is The Child Life Council advocating at the government level to maintain prominence and position in the provision of pediatric healthcare?"

Conclusion

CLC would like to thank everyone who participated in the survey. Your opinions are very important to us and will help shape future decision-making. If you did not answer the survey or if you have additional comments or concerns, please let us know at any time. The CLC staff is here to serve and support you. Contact us at certification@childlife.org.



Quotes from the 2011 Child Life Professional Certification Program survey:

"I am excited about the growth of child life and look forward to a future where child life is better known and accepted."

"The Child Life profession is unique and should stay that way....I think the requirements to be certified are too easy and too many people are sitting for the exam and calling themselves Child Life Specialists with no Child life education or experience. We need to stay relevant and hold our profession up to higher standards."

"As a field dominated by women, I am concerned about the expense and difficulty of keeping a certification when taking time off from work to raise a family."

"We need to continue working towards a standardized curriculum for students."

"Ethics and proper boundaries are other things students seem to be lacking. How do we incorporate those into initial training and requirements for recertification?"

"I just want to reinforce my strong belief, that Child Life needs to be standardized. The field needs to be more difficult to get into to keep up the high standards of Child Life."

"I find it difficult to find full time employment in Child Life in areas outside of large cities/jobs are hard to find."

"Thank you for taking the time to make changes and improve the CCLS profession."

"There really should be more consistency among child life departments. Even in the same city you can find MAJOR differences between programs. It would be nice if there was a committee that reached out and visited each program to make suggestions and evaluate each program."

"Being able to keep track of PDHs online through CLC member profiles is excellent!"

"I appreciate all of your effort in working to improve our profession. Keep up the good work and know that you are helping to move the profession forward!"

"Eventually, in coming years, the Child Life Council should seriously consider recommending a Master's degree in Child Life, Child Development or a related field to continue to increase knowledge, preparedness and professionalism."

"I have been a CLS for 19 years and the CLC has done an outstanding job keeping us informed and opening lines for communication. I know there are improvements to be made and I look forward to seeing them in the future as we continue to grow as a profession."

"Would like to see certification move in the direction of licensing instead of certification and a masters degree requirement."

"I really wish more effort would go in to raising public awareness of this profession!"

"I feel that Childlife should be more accessible for people that are working in the field overseas."

"I love the fact of finally being able to take the certification exam on-line and close to home. It completely decreases the level of anxiety a candidate can have going into the exam. Thank you CLC!"

"I found some of the questions on the exam to be difficult to answer and...unfair in that many of the questions had more than one right answer. Many times in clinical practice there are times when the so called "better answer" may not be the one that should be used...I thought that some of these questions were an inaccurate reflection of real world situations ..."

"I think CLC is doing great work on increasing more standardization regarding intern program."

"We have a truly amazing profession!"

