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New research from pediatric organizations confirms critical role of child life specialists in medical environments

A new policy statement published by the American Academy of Pediatrics, “Child Life Services,” updates previous guidance on child life with new data, research, and information on the expansion of these services beyond traditional hospital inpatient care.

In response to this new policy, Bailey Kasten, COO and Interim CEO for the Association of Child Life Professionals, issued the following statement:

“Our collaborative research with the American Academy of Pediatrics shows that child life professionals are not only critical for ensuring that children have access to emotional safety support in medical environments, but are essential to providing quality holistic care for children, parents, and families.”

“We applaud the American Academy of Pediatrics for recognizing the important role child life specialists play in a healthcare environment. Child life specialists are frontline professionals trained to provide in-the-moment emotional support and help children and families cope with stressful, traumatic experiences in hospital and other healthcare settings. The evidence presented in this research demonstrates that child life professionals play an integral role in providing families with a positive health care experience.”

“Child life services have long played an integral role in helping children and families cope with stressful experiences in hospitals and other healthcare settings, and ultimately prevent or mitigate the harmful impacts of trauma in a medical environment. By prioritizing child life services, the health community sends a clear message that investing in and prioritizing child life specialists in the medical environment ensure accessibility for all families.”

“As hospitals continue to adapt healthcare practices to keep up with the changing demands of pediatric care, every parent should walk into a hospital and expect a child life specialist to be there. Child life specialists who can provide emotional safety to children should be a “must have,” not a “nice to have” for children in a medical setting.”

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About the Association of Child Life Professionals

ACLP advances psychosocial care and the emotional safety of children, youth, and families impacted by healthcare and significant life experiences. If you would like to learn more about child life services, please contact Bailey Kasten at bkasten@childlife.org