



## STANDARDS FOR ACADEMIC & CLINICAL PREPARATION PROGRAMS

### INTRODUCTION

The child life profession developed in response to an increasing awareness that healing is enhanced, and emotional distress mitigated, when the developmental and psychosocial needs of infants, children, youth and families are understood and met. Academic and clinical preparation programs exist to complement and support the child life profession. These programs are vital to child life as the excellence of any profession depends on the performance of its practitioners. The first edition of these standards was developed over a period of time from 1987 to 1992 to achieve high quality and maximum effectiveness in the profession. This revision was undertaken to reflect the growth of the profession and its practitioners.

It is the responsibility of the academic and clinical preparation programs to put forth competent individuals who are prepared to establish their eligibility to sit for (and pass) the Child Life Professional Certification Examination.

The child life profession draws practitioners from many academic environments, some educated in programs specifically for child life preparation and others with a variety of other educational backgrounds. It is not the intention of these standards to establish a rigid formula for career preparation that all child life professionals must follow. Their purpose is to serve as a guide for anyone wishing to pursue an academic or clinical training program in child life.

### SUPERVISION

#### Clinical Coordinator

A CCLS who has a minimum of 8,000 hours of paid child life clinical experience and has provided clinical rotation supervision to at least three child life interns prior to taking on this role. This person is responsible for developing and implementing the student programs with the support of the clinical rotation supervisors, consistent with the ACLP Child Life Clinical Internship Curriculum. Works with the clinical rotation supervisors to educate, evaluate, mentor, and coach students who wish to pursue a career in child life. Ensures educational opportunities for students are available to help them gain knowledge and experience in development of the child life competencies. This person has weekly meetings with the intern to ensure learning needs are met. Serves as a liaison between the child life department and academic institutions.

#### Clinical Rotation Supervisor

A CCLS who has a minimum of 4,000 hours of paid child life clinical experience prior to taking on the supervisory role. This person is responsible for the direct (day-to-day) clinical supervision and training of students. Responsibilities include:

1. Orientation to patient unit, interdisciplinary team, diagnosis/population, and role of child life in the assigned area.
2. Defining action steps to achieve competence relative to the ACLP's Standards of Clinical Practice and Competencies. Training the student in developing knowledge and skills that relate to the child life competencies (documentation, health-care play, procedural support, diagnostic teaching, procedural preparation, other therapeutic interventions) and then observing the intern demonstrate a minimum, entry-level professional competence in those areas.

3. Communicating areas of strength, areas needing improvement, and those needing more opportunity (evaluations, coaching, mentoring, corrective instruction).
4. Verifying the internship hours for exam eligibility.

### **Academic Coordinator**

A professor, academic advisor, or university employee that supports students in applying for and completing clinical internships. This individual may, depending on their scope of employment, coordinate the internship placements for students, seek out new internship sites, negotiate contracts with internship sites to incorporate goals and objectives, evaluate internship sites, and prepare students for internships. Academic coordinators are responsible for maintaining contracts with the internship sites and preparing all academic paperwork for students and supervisors (excluding the Clinical Experience Verification form for certification eligibility). This position is based at the academic institution.

### **Academic Supervisor**

A professor, academic advisor, or university employee that supports students while completing clinical internships. This individual should ensure contact with the site while the student is at the internship. This individual may provide feedback on assignments and journals and will discuss midterm and final evaluations with the clinical coordinator and student. Academic supervisors are not responsible for direct supervision of clinical requirements and do not verify the internship hours for certification exam eligibility. This individual works with the clinical coordinator or clinical rotation supervisor to determine a final grade for the student. This position is based at the academic institution.

At some universities, the academic coordinator and academic supervisor may be the same person. Interns who are not receiving college credit for an internship will not have an academic coordinator or supervisor.

## **ACADEMIC PREPARATION**

### **I. INSTITUTIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PARAMETERS**

The institution (college or university) that offers a child life education program should demonstrate in its overall organizational structure and plan that there is sufficient support to enable quality education of students. Endorsed undergraduate and graduate child life academic programs demonstrate quality of teaching, learning, and professional practice. Endorsed academic programs provide an assurance that the program meets the coursework requirements as set forth by the ACLP, as well as providing appropriately prepared faculty and administrative support. Endorsement is a voluntary process of self-study and external review intended to evaluate, enhance, and publicly recognize academic programs that meet the standards prescribed by ACLP.

- A. The sponsoring institution should support the goals and purposes of the child life academic program, supplying adequate personnel; appropriate financial support; and sufficient facilities, including offices, classrooms, libraries, and clinical space. Documentation of administrative support for the child life program is required for endorsed academic programs.
- B. The child life academic program should provide a cohesive design for study with sound theoretical and scholarly bases. Courses and clinical applications should be organized in logical sequence, with a thoughtful partnering for learning and practicing the implementation of theories. Documentation of student program plan or coursework pathway is required for endorsed academic programs. In addition to academic programming, students should be encouraged to volunteer or apply for practicum programs to begin to apply academic knowledge.
- C. Completion of an endorsed undergraduate or graduate academic preparation program in child life ensures that students will meet the academic eligibility requirements to sit for

the Child Life Professional Certification Examination. An academic program cannot guarantee that a student is able to obtain a Child Life Internship that would provide the clinical eligibility to sit for the Child Life Professional Certification Exam. Regardless of the type of academic program attended, each student applies for certification on an individual basis.

- D. The qualifications of the faculty and staff should indicate backgrounds of study and professional experience directly related to the courses they teach or the clinical experience they supervise. Professional certification by the Child Life Certification Commission is strongly recommended for faculty teaching specific child life theoretical and applied courses, particularly those serving as academic and/or clinical coordinators and supervisors for student clinical placements. Endorsed programs are required to have a minimum of 1.0 FTE faculty member who holds an advanced degree, is a current Certified Child Life Specialist, and is involved in child life program decision making and curriculum development.
- E. The faculty and staff teaching courses directly related to child life should have experience in and current knowledge of services for infants, children, youth, and families experiencing trauma and/or stress and should be members of the Association of Child Life Professionals and other related organizations. It would be extremely beneficial for these faculty members to participate in research activities related to child life practice and be abreast of current research findings, instilling the notion of evidence-based practice in their students.
- F. Each child life academic program is encouraged to pursue a self-evaluation of its components every five years. Methods for self-evaluation should include curriculum review, a survey of current and former students in clinical practice as well as supervisors in connected clinical settings, and examination of its descriptive documents, including the academic and clinical curricula with accompanying course syllabi. Curriculum vitae and teaching assignments should be included in these program reviews. Supportive documentation to demonstrate the process and survey outcomes should be available for review. These self-evaluations are reviewed by endorsed programs when they submit annual maintenance documents and reapply every five years through the ACLP Academic Review Committee. When applying for endorsement, programs must reference these self-evaluations. All programs should be at colleges that maintain some form of accreditation—through a regional or national higher education commission or through other organizations such as American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences (AAFCS). An overview of these materials should be available on the university website.

## **II. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- A. The academic coordinator should be familiar with the clinical preparation site before the student begins an internship. Additionally, the school should regularly review the clinical preparation sites and fieldwork interactions to ensure that student assignments are appropriate. Student educational needs should be of primary consideration in clinical placement assignment. Reassignment should be made if the student's needs are not met. If students have additional concerns, they may reference the Internship Accreditation Oversight Committee (IAOC) grievance process for students.
- B. Ongoing, systematic collaboration should occur between clinical coordinator and personnel from the academic institution. It is recommended that a site visit by the academic faculty be made to the clinical site a minimum of every two years and when the clinical site leadership changes. Active and ongoing communication between

internship site and academic institution is essential and expected. Ongoing, systematic evaluation and advising of students, both in academic and clinical areas, is critical.

- C. The academic program should keep abreast of professional requirements and advise students not only about course work needs, but also about types of supervised fieldwork recommended by clinical programs. Current required fieldwork in child life preparation required for certification includes the clinical internship. Other fieldwork opportunities may include volunteer opportunities or practicums and are not required through the Standards for Clinical Practice or the Child Life Certification Commission.
- D. Assistance in career placement should be made available to students.

### III. CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS

Recognizing the importance of education, the Child Life Certification Commission (CLCC) has identified areas of study germane to child life practice. This information has been incorporated in an education/course work eligibility requirement. The academic requirements for certification eligibility can be found in the *Candidate Manual for the Child Life Professional Certification*. Information on undergraduate endorsement curriculum can be found within the [Undergraduate Endorsement web page of ACLP's website](#). Graduate endorsement curriculum can be found within the [Graduate Endorsement web page of ACLP's website](#).

**Endorsed academic programs in child life provide an assurance that a program meets the academic standards set forth by the ACLP to meet certification requirements. Students graduating from an endorsed program will still need to complete an eligibility assessment with ACLP but will not need to have each course reviewed as endorsement signifies inclusion of all areas of the coursework requirement.**

#### CLINICAL PREPARATION

##### I. CLINICAL INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

*See [CLCC Policies Manual](#) (Section 3, 1.0 Establishing Eligibility) for clinical experience requirements.*

##### II. SUPERVISION OPTION FOR EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES

*See [CLCC Policies Manual](#) (Section 3, 3.0 Application for Approval of Remote Supervision Under Extenuating Circumstances)*

**This document does not dictate certification policy. Certification policies are developed by the Child Life Certification Commission (CLCC).**

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