



# Internship Application Process Guide

Created by the Education & Training Committee, Spring 2015

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The Association of Child Life Professionals (ACLP) acknowledges that the child life internship application and interview process can be both extensive and increasingly competitive. The ACLP Education & Training Committee offers this Tip Sheet & Application Process Overview information to support students interested in becoming a child life internship candidate.

## **Child Life Clinical Internship:**

*Hands-on experience for individuals who plan to pursue a career in child life. Provides the student with an opportunity to build on coursework and put theory into practice while working in a variety of hospital and related settings under the direction of a Certified Child Life Specialist (CCLS). Goals include:*

- *Enhance knowledge regarding the psychosocial care of infants, children, youth, and families.*
- *Demonstrate assessment and intervention skills.*
- *Increase independence in providing services.*
- *Develop skills that can be applied to any entry-level position in child life.*

*(The Official Documents of the Child Life Council, 2011)*

## Table of Contents:

Where to Start	2
Resume & Relevant Experience	4
Cover Letter	4
Common Application Essay Section	5
References/Common Internship Application Recommendation Form	6
Applications	7
Verification of Hours Forms	7
Course Requirement Forms	8
Overall Tips	10
Sending your Application	10
Interviews	11
Before	11
During	11
After	11
Cost	12
Professionalism	13
Offer Day and Beyond	13

## Where to Start

- Please note that you will have to follow the 2019 Certification Requirements. You can find those requirements at <http://www.childlife.org/certification/students/requirements-after-2019>
- Decide where to apply. Recognize the interview process is reciprocal: it is important that the student take an active role in interviewing hospitals and programs the same way a Child Life Specialist or Internship Coordinator interviews a potential intern. Research hospitals of interest to identify programs that align with personal expectations (i.e., size of hospital, opportunities to help develop specific skills).
- After determining which potential hospitals best match the predetermined expectations, visit the program's website to learn more about specific child life internship application requirements.
- Consider the following:
  - Does the potential site accept the Common Child Life Internship Application?
  - Does the program utilize the Common Child Life Internship Application and/or Common Recommendation Form? Or, do they require their own form or recommendation letters? How many recommendation forms/letters are needed?
  - Is child life practicum experience required to be considered eligible?
  - Does the program accept a child life practicum in progress?
  - Will related experiences (working with pediatric patients not under direct supervision of a CCLS) be considered for internship eligibility?
  - Does the hospital's legal department require a student to be in school or affiliated with a university to apply and complete an internship?

Affiliation can have different applied meanings and can vary by university and hospital. Affiliation can mean that students are enrolled in just one course or it can mean that students need to be degree-seeking (getting credit specifically toward completion of a degree). If a hospital requires that students be affiliated, students will need to verify with hospitals whether they require students be degree-seeking or if enrollment in a single class is acceptable. Students will also need to verify if their university can enter into contractual agreements with all hospitals or if there are any restrictions.

- Does the internship site have a minimum GPA requirement?
- How many hours/what types of experiences with children are required to be considered an eligible applicant?
- Does the program follow the ACLP's recommendation application deadline and offer process?

- Is the program an Accredited Internship Site? **Please note** that at this time interns are not required to complete an internship at only accredited sites.
- A list of Clinical Internship Programs that have received accreditation status can be found at <http://www.childlife.org/educators/internship-accreditation/accredited-internships>

ACLP Clinical Internship Accreditation assures that a program or consortium meets the minimum standards and requirements established for clinical preparation programs in child life in the most current *Official Documents of the Child Life Council* as well as the Child Life Clinical Internship Learning Modules. Accreditation is a voluntary two-step process of self-study and external review intended to evaluate, enhance, and publicly recognize quality child life clinical internship programs, promoting the interests of students and the child life profession as a whole through continuous quality improvement of learning and professional practice. For more information on accreditation standards please visit [www.childlife.org/resources/for-educators-internship-coordinators/internship-accreditation](http://www.childlife.org/resources/for-educators-internship-coordinators/internship-accreditation)

- Critically look at programs when you plan on how many you will apply to. Avoid applying to any programs that would be difficult to relocate/move to for the duration of the internship.
- A list of available internship programs can be found by doing a search in the ACLP Community Directory of Child Life Programs (ACLP members-only tool). Within the program directory (found under ACLP Community page), click on the option to “Custom Search by Criteria” and select the individual measures viewed as important for the potential internship to offer. Each program listing has a tab titled “Internships and Volunteers” which offers a starting point for information, including a “last updated on” date at the bottom of the page. The date helps the student in recognizing how current the information is.
- Be aware that not all programs accept interns for all sessions, and some may take breaks from time to time. Note of a hiatus may not always be updated in the program directory. If clarification is needed about any information shared within a program’s listing, it is recommended that the student communicate with a site individually to ensure that program is accepting interns for the session under consideration.

## Resume & Relevant Experience

- Contact your campus career center or view resume samples online if assistance is needed with resume writing. Choose a style that is organized, easy to read and professional. Avoid using a resume as a tool to demonstrate your creativity.
- Proofread everything prior to submission. It is helpful to ask someone else to review the application materials before mailing to make sure there are no errors and that everything is easily understood.
- Ensure the resume is concise and relevant (typically no more than one page front and back). It is not necessary to have personalized materials made (business cards, pre-written thank you letters, etc.). Focus on the content of the materials being submitted per facility requirements.
- Remember that the resume is about quality, not quantity. Focus on any experience that sets one apart as a quality intern. While this may mean leaving out information in the initial phase, additional details can be shared during the interview portion of the application process.

## Cover Letter

- Beginning with the applications due in Spring 2019, there is now a Common Cover Letter requirement as part of the Common Child Life Internship Application.
- Included with your application should also be a cover letter written for each specific internship site you are applying to. The cover should include what interests you about each specific program, as well as what makes you a good fit for the site.
- It is recommended that you do research about each internship site and include what you have learned in your cover letter. For example, some sites may advertise their focus on sibling support. You can highlight your previous experience working with siblings, or your goal of gaining that experience, when writing your cover letter.
- The cover letter also provides you an outlet to share a bit more information about your previous experiences, as well as why you want to become a child life specialist. Keep in mind though, the cover letter is only a snapshot of you and your interest in the program. Its length should be kept to one page.

## Common Application Essay Section

- Make sure that you completely answer each essay question, ensuring you use the word count wisely. It's important to convey that you understand the question that is being asked. Think about when it's appropriate to include theories and tie your answer to practical examples as well, such as when answering the essay question on play.
- You will notice that beginning with the applications due Spring 2019, there is now one additional portion within the Essay Question section. This asks applicants to list three goals and three objectives as listed below:

**Please list three goals and three objectives for each that you expect to accomplish during your internship.**

**Example:** To gain experience providing developmental support to hospitalized infants.

Objective 1: I will observe my supervisor provide developmental support to children within this age group.

Objective 2: I will develop a personal resource binder on typical infant development.

Objective 3: I will practice providing developmental support to infants initially under supervision and then eventually independently.

- Ensure you utilize this to critically think of three child life specific goals/objectives to highlight to the program that you are invested in the internship process and in being an active learner in the process.

## References/Common Internship Application Recommendation Form

- Beginning with the applications due in Spring 2019, there is an additional form included at the end of the Common Internship Application which is the Common Recommendation Form. The goal of the Education and Training Committee with adding this form is with the hope that many programs will utilize this form to provide consistency for applicants.
- Identify strong references that can speak to specific work as an employee, advisee or student. Avoid using personal references, such as an acquaintance or friend.
- Encourage references to share examples of skills and experiences. Provide a personal copy of the resume for additional information-this will offer the reference an ability to highlight key points. Letters that simply document hours of experience are not a strong representation of overall experience; though in some cases, when specifically requested, would be appropriate.
- Make your requests early (one-two months in advance is suggested). This allows references the time needed to complete specific requests-and is especially important as application deadlines often fall at the beginning or end of a new semester.
  - Be sure to review application requirements of each program prior to requesting recommendation forms/letters, as some hospitals will use the Common Recommendation Form that is part of the ACLP Internship Application while others will have different required recommendation forms and letters; some will require they are hand written and sealed while others will require digital copies. Prior to requesting reference forms/letters, it is important to know what, if any additional documents should be included within the signed/sealed envelope. This will prevent you from having to send additional materials later or from having to ask your reference providers for additional copies of your recommendation letter.
- The top portion of the new Common Recommendation Form should be completed by the applicant prior to providing it to the person writing the reference. This allows the applicant to inform the reference person where to send the form: emailed to a specific email address or mailed to a specific address and whether it should be signed/sealed.
- If it is to be signed/sealed and mailed to a program, provide your references with pre-addressed/postage paid envelopes so that each letter can be sealed and signed and mailed directly to the program by the reference provider. If your reference letters should be included with your internship application and not mailed directly to internship sites by your reference provider then ensure they are returned to you at least two weeks prior to the submission deadline. Hospitals requiring electronic submissions may request documents be submitted electronically or directly to them.
- Send a thank you to those who have completed a reference letter. Email messaging is acceptable.

## Applications

- Many (not all) child life internship sites follow the ACLP's recommended deadlines for internship applications
- Please note that programs that have received ACLP Internship Accreditation status are required to follow the ACLP's recommended application deadlines. A list of the ACLP's recommendation deadlines can be found at <http://www.childlife.org/resources/for-educators-internship-coordinators/internship-deadlines>
- Create a timeline to successfully complete the application. If a program does not follow the ACLP guidelines for submission, use the information specific to the program.

## Verification of Hours Forms

- There are two forms available to be used as verification of hours that can be shared with supervisors for completion. Please note that these forms are encouraged to be used as the standard documentation. Be aware that some sites require verification of hours from every experience, however may also require their own documentation. It's helpful to clarify with programs if the child life practicum experience must be completed prior to applying or if it can be "in progress" when you apply and complete when you start the internship.

1. Verification of Child Life Practicum Experience Hours form. This form should be completed by the practicum supervisor and submitted with the application. Check with each clinical internship site to verify whether this form is accepted. This form can be found at the end of the Common Child Life Internship Application at

**Note:** If the practicum is still in-progress, the Practicum In-Progress form should be used. This form should be completed by the practicum supervisor and is used to verify that a student is currently enrolled in a practicum and in good standing (expected to complete/pass practicum experience). This form can be found at the end of the Common Child Life Internship Application.

2. Verification of Related Experience Hours form. This form should be filled out by a supervisor to verify any completed child life related volunteer/paid hours. These experiences can include volunteer/paid hours of working with children in healthcare settings, camps for children with chronic illnesses, programs with children with special needs, advocacy programs, bereavement/hospice experiences, or experiences in working with well children. Check with each clinical internship site to verify whether this form is accepted. This form can be found at the end of the Common Child Life Internship Application.

## Course Requirement Forms

- There are three forms related to the child life class requirement: The **Child Life Course In-Progress Form**, the **Additional Courses in Progress Form** and the **Child Life Course Verification Form**. Each form has a different purpose. It's helpful to clarify with programs if all courses must be completed by the time you apply, or if any can be "in progress" when you apply and complete by the time you start the internship.

1. The **Child Life Course In-Progress Form** can/should be used in two ways:

1. If a student is enrolled in a child life class (taught by a CCLS) and the course will not be completed prior to application deadlines. This form can be given to the instructor for completion and submitted along with the internship application. It is the student's responsibility to check with each internship site to verify whether this form is accepted.
2. When semester grades are not expected to be released in time to submit internship application. For example, the summer internship application date is January 5<sup>th</sup>. Many colleges are closed for winter break, which prevents grades from being released in time to include in the application or have them approved/recognized through the eligibility assessment portal.

**Please note:** The Child Life Course In-Progress cannot be used to apply for certification eligibility; only the Child Life Course Verification Form can be applied toward eligibility. The In-Progress form is **only** used to apply for internships and is a way to validate your enrollment. This form can be found at the end of the Common Child Life Internship Application.

2. The **Child Life Course Verification Form** should only be used **after the course has been completed**.

This form can be given to the instructor for completion (if it is not automatically provided) and submitted with the internship application. This is the form that is used to establish that students have met the child life course criteria that applies toward certification. Please note that Child Life Course Verification Form should only be submitted to Eligibility Assessment through the ACLP portal **after** the course has been completed.

Not all internship sites will require the Child Life Course Verification Form since this can be verified by the program using the completed ACLP Eligibility Assessment. Applicants should check with each individual internship site to which they are applying to confirm if the Child Life Course Verification Form is also required.

**Please note:** There may be occasions when applications are due prior to the release of previous semester grades, making it impossible to include grades or have them approved through the eligibility assessment. For example, the deadline for summer

internships is January 5<sup>th</sup> and many colleges closed for winter break may not release the Fall quarter/semester grades. This is when a student should use the **Child Life Course In-Progress Form**. It is the student's responsibility to check with each internship site to verify whether this form is accepted. This form can be found at the end of the Common Internship application.

3. The **Additional Courses In-Progress Form** can/should be used in two ways:
  1. If a student is enrolled in any of the other required 9 courses and the course will not be completed prior to application deadlines. This form can be given to the instructor for completion and submitted along with the internship application. It is the student's responsibility to check with each internship site to verify whether this form is accepted.
  2. When semester grades are not expected to be released in time to submit internship application. For example, the summer internship application date is January 5<sup>th</sup>. Many colleges are closed for winter break, which prevents grades from being released in time to include in the application or have them approved/recognized through the eligibility assessment portal.

**Please note:** The Additional Courses in Progress Form **cannot** be used to apply for certification eligibility. This form can be found at the end of the Common Internship application.

- You will notice on the Additional Courses in Progress form that there is a box where the academic person completing the form will answer if the program is an endorsed program and/or if the course is pre-approved. Below are some definitions to clarify what ACLP means by an endorsed program and pre-approved courses:

Undergraduate and graduate programs can apply to become endorsed if they are able to meet ACLP's criteria related to faculty and administration, student support, and curriculum. A program that has achieved endorsement can remain endorsed for a period of five years, and must annually demonstrate that they continue to meet ACLP's requirements for endorsement.

Programs unable to currently meet ACLP's criteria for endorsement may choose to instead apply for course pre-approval. This is a process where the academic program submits course syllabi to be compared with the coursework eligibility requirements effective January 2019. When a course is pre-approved, it means that a student who successfully completes it is guaranteed that the specific course will be approved for exam eligibility.

## Overall Tips

- If using a template, please be sure to double check all information and proofread all materials prior to submission.
- Review materials to make sure the application is complete. An incomplete application may often be the reason a candidate is not invited to participate in an interview. It is recommended that students create a checklist or Excel spreadsheet for each application to ensure each one is complete.
- The Association of Child Life Professionals offers valuable resources to help guide the process:
  - Internship application deadlines:  
<http://www.childlife.org/certification/students/internship-deadlines>
  - ACLP Eligibility Assessment:  
<http://www.childlife.org/certification/students/review-my-courses>

## Sending your Application

- Carefully follow the instructions for each program and send the information as requested in the application checklist (i.e. if a site requires two letters of recommendation, don't send four). Keep in mind that different programs have different requirements in their application. Be prepared to provide additional details during the interview.
- Present the application documents in a well-organized manner; it is generally appropriate to follow the order that is listed on the hospital website. Keep the application clean and be sure it is NOT handwritten. It is recommended that applicants use a paperclip to keep documents together rather than using a folder or portfolio unless it is noted by the internship site that they do not want paperclips or any binding materials included.
- Make hard copies of all the materials being submitted as part of the application in the event of a mailing issue or if materials need to be re-sent.
- Use Priority Mail or Certified Mail when sending your application. Priority mail can be traced as it has a tracking number and allow the applicant to see when the package arrives at the site. Certified Mail requires a signature from the receiver which helps notify the applicant that the deliver has been completed. Not all internship sites will send confirmation when they receive your application.
- If you are applying via an online portal, then confirm with the site if the application is due by midnight on the deadline date or another time. It is important to be aware of the time zone the site is in if there is a time deadline.

## **Interviews**

### **Before**

- Appropriate business dress attire and comfortable shoes are acceptable.
- Review directions to the site and allow additional travel time in the event you get lost or to accommodate for parking. Arrive a bit ahead of schedule.
- Practice interviewing with someone you trust.
- Using the information learned while researching the site, create questions to ask during the interview. It is appropriate to have questions for each round of interviews (phone and in person). Not asking questions may demonstrate a lack of interest in the program. Use the interview to gather information regarding program requirements, housing, etc.

### **During**

- Consider the importance of non-verbal impressions. Make good eye contact, and be aware of your body language throughout the interview.
- Listen carefully to each question and answer clearly and succinctly. It is okay to ask for additional clarification if needed.
- Provide depth to responses by using specific examples.

### **After**

- Following the interview, jot down notes about the program - strengths, alignment with personal goals, overall impression. Upon completion of all interviews, list and rank the programs in order of interest. This will be a valuable resource to help guide your decision making during the offer phase.
- Send a thank you letter to all sites who offered an opportunity to participate in an interview. Email communication is acceptable.

## Cost

- To help students gain a general idea of potential costs associated with applying for internships, please see the following cost analysis. This is meant to be a general guideline, and not necessarily indicative of actual costs accrued for every student, as expenses will vary per internship program. The following estimate is provided to aid students in planning accordingly, and is based upon an applicant applying to approximately 15 internship sites.
- Candidates should check with each program to determine if unofficial transcripts are accepted at the time the candidate applies for internship. Some programs will accept unofficial transcripts at the time of applying and then require official transcripts only once the candidate is accepted into the program. This is one way to potentially save the candidate money.

<b>Application Component</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Notes</b>
ACLP Student Membership	\$75.00	
ACLP Eligibility Assessment	\$75.00	
Official Transcripts (ACLP)	\$0 - \$20.00	Dependent upon academic institution
Official Transcripts (Internship Sites)	\$0 - \$300.00	Dependent on academic institution and clinical internship site requirements
Application Fees	\$0-\$100.00	Dependent on sites; fee varies
Photocopying, Resume Paper, Envelopes, etc.	\$50.00	Average estimate
Postage	\$60.00	Average estimate
On Site Interviews-if required by institution	\$0-\$400.00 per site	Average estimate
<b>ESTIMATED TOTAL</b>	<b>\$660.00 - \$1080.00+</b>	

## Professionalism

- Professionalism is very important. Be sure that any email address used is reflective of the image being projected.
- It is acceptable to reach out to communicate with individual programs, yet be respectful of the coordinators' time. Internship coordinators have many other job responsibilities in addition to internships. Coordinators can be Child Life Managers, Clinical Leads, or Child Life Specialists with clinical responsibilities (in addition to internship preparation and coordination).
- As many sites receive a high volume of applications (50+), it is not a reasonable expectation that personal communication will be provided to note if an application has been received. Using Priority or Certified Mail offer means to track the process individually.

## Offer Day and Beyond

- Many (not all) child life internship sites follow the ACLP's recommended offer process for internship applications. Please note that programs that have received ACLP Internship Accreditation status are required to follow the ACLP's recommended application deadlines.
- A complete list of the offer date/process can be found at <http://www.childlife.org/resources/for-educators-internship-coordinators/internship-deadlines>
- On the day that offers are extended, a program may ask for an immediate response. It is acceptable to respond in turn, "In keeping with the ACLP offer acceptance guidelines, I will use the 24 hours to consider your offer and will respond to you tomorrow."
  - The ACLP recommended timeline provides students a full 24 hours to make their decision.
  - If more than one offer is received, be gracious and professional in your correspondence to programs whose offers will be declined.
  - In accepting an internship offer, a commitment is being made to an institution; all other offers should be declined in a timely manner.
- Sometimes an internship site does not secure their first choice and will offer to additional candidates. Because each subsequent applicant can be allowed a period of time to consider acceptance, it is possible that offers may be extended a few days following the initial offer date.
- If not selected for an internship during a session, anticipate that the application will need to be re-submitted for the next session, even if an application has been submitted to that location before. Most internship supervisors do not have the ability to keep files for students who are not selected (as many are accepted at other sites). More importantly, it is expected that an applicant would be updating the information to be reflective of additional experiences gained since the last submission process.

- If an offer is not received, consider contacting the site where the interview took place. The program may be able to offer information such as the need for more experience, education, etc. to help direct future opportunities and increase chances for success.
- The application process is a personal and professional investment when beginning a career as a child life specialist.