

## **Statement for Interns Regarding CLCC's Eligibility Policies for Interns Impacted by the Coronavirus Pandemic**

*March 31, 2020*

This is a time of many changes and many uncertainties. As a student intern, you are likely experiencing many of these uncertainties, such as the pausing of your internship as the pandemic begins to impact our healthcare systems. The Child Life Certification Commission (CLCC) has received many inquiries and heard many stories regarding your experiences and needs at this time. First, we want you to know we hear you, and we sympathize with everyone during this trying time.

It is also a difficult time for CLCC. Here we hope to give you a little more information that may help you understand CLCC's perspective.

We believe it is important for you as a professional in-training to understand the makeup of CLCC. Commissioners (i.e., members of the CLCC) are volunteers who are committed to setting and upholding the standards of our very important credential, CCLS. This means that the CLCC includes members who are clinical internship supervisors, academic coordinators, community-based professionals, clinicians, and directors of programs. We say this to let you know all voices are represented in decisions. We have academics and clinical supervisors who advocate for students and voice the potential impacts of decisions on students and commissioners who were interns in the past.

Next, it is important for you to understand the mission of the CLCC. As mentioned above, the mission is to set and uphold the standards of the CCLS credential. When a person has the CCLS credential, it tells the public this person has the training, skills, and knowledge to provide entry level work as a child life specialist. The primary purpose of the certification program is to protect the children and families we all strive to serve. Holding the credential shows that the individual has met the standards set by a credentialing body and as a result, that body believes they can provide psychosocial care in a safe way.

CLCC is getting many requests about the current standards, particularly the completion of a 600-hour clinical internship under the supervision of a CLCC for certification eligibility. These requests ask CLCC to consider this a special scenario and allow for fewer hours as interns are being displaced from their internships.

Like all interns before you, we know that you have sacrificed personally and financially to first earn this internship and then to complete it. This situation is completely out of your hands. We recognize that many are asking, "Why should I be penalized for something that is outside my control?" You have had some great experiences and have gained some great skills and knowledge. If you are missing some required skills, you have the beginning foundation to learn the rest.

However, too often, CCLSs meet patients at an extremely vulnerable time in their development. An untrained person might impact children in a negative way. Obviously, this would reflect poorly on the CCLS, but also on the credential as a whole. Legally, CLCC must be able to say that we have developed the standards for certification in an evidence-based, psychometrically-sound manner and have held all credential holders to the same standard.

Most interns have completed around 400 hours at this time (for those that started early). Others have fewer than 400 hours. This means that most interns have 200 or more hours to complete. The last leg of internships are the ones in which interns really gain their independence and start functioning at entry level. It is the time where they truly shift

from an intern to a professional. It is the time where clinical supervisors see what exam content competencies interns need and make sure they have the opportunities to practice and demonstrate those competencies.

The CLCC and the profession shifted from a 480-hour required internship to a 600-hour internship in 2019. Do you know why? Because most people working in the field recognized that additional hours were really needed to prepare professionals to the best of our ability. Yes, CLCC set the standard but it was a welcome addition by the profession (clinical supervisors, academics, etc.) as a whole, and while this increase only became effective within the last couple years, it was announced and anticipated for 6 years prior to implementation.

You may still be saying- "I get all of this, but I just want to be a child life specialist, and I have to be certified. Just let me pass this hurdle." CLCC has the 600-hour requirement because it was determined to be the minimum length of time to meet the competencies (the components of the exam content outline) of an entry level child life specialist. An internship with significantly less hours does not give all interns adequate training to perform at entry level. Our job is to protect the public and the credential by setting standards that substantiate the credential holders' proficiency.

You are going through all of this because you want to be a CCLS. It is your dream and your passion. Being a CCLS is what is important to all of us. It gives us meaning and fulfills us. The credential allows us to have this meaning. When you become a CCLS and tell someone you are a CCLS, you will beam with pride. Try to remember that these tough decisions will allow you to have that pride because the CCLS credential will have meaning. The upholding of the standards may not be what you want right now but it will benefit you in the long run by helping you become the best trained professional you can be.

This credential is the foundation of our credibility as a profession. The leaders before us and the current members of CLCC recognize the impact of this and make decisions based on protecting the public and the credibility of the credential. Without standards, the credential would lose its meaning and so would our profession.

So, what can you do to move forward?

- First, advocate for yourself at your internship sites. Speak with your internship coordinators and discuss the possibility of coming back once things return to "normal".
- Speak with your academic coordinator about graduation plans.
- Speak with both your academic and clinical coordinators to discuss how to continue learning virtually during this time away.
- Gain verification of the hours you have completed thus far using the Clinical Experience Verification Form.
- If sites are not inviting you back, begin to seek support from other programs who may be willing to provide the remaining experience.

This has not been an easy decision for CLCC. Many hours have been spent carefully examining every possibility. Ultimately, we recognize the importance of the 600 hours to provide interns with the training and experiences they need to meet the exam content outline competencies and become the best child life specialist possible. It is only then that we can all best serve children and families.