

Child Life Specialist

Background -

Child Life Specialists have expertise in helping families and children navigate extremely difficult circumstances regarding health care. Specialists provide evidence based and developmentally appropriate interventions to children, youth and families that help them cope with the stress due to trauma, injury, illness, death and disability. Daily activities include meeting with individual children that you are assigned, preparing that child for any procedures that will be happening that day, checking in with the family and child about their feelings, thoughts or worries and addressing any problems the family is facing.

What is a possible salary for a Child Life Specialist? ~\$40, 000 Annually*

What additional certification is required to practice? A Child Life Specialist must be accredited from the Child Life Council (CLC) to practice. The licensing requirements (courses, practicum experiences and scores on licensing exams) change from year to year. More information for licensure can be found at <http://www.childlife.org/certification>

What classes at GVSU may help me in my career? Discuss with your advisor which courses among those on this list, along with other courses not listed here, and would best serve your career goals.

1. **PSY 301** – Child development
2. **PSY 302** – Psychology of Adjustment
3. **PSY 331** – Adolescent Psychology
4. **PSY 322** – Responding to Chronic Illness
5. **PSY 367** – Health Psychology
6. **PSY 435**- Physiological
7. **COM 209** – Health Communications Systems
8. **Therapeutic Recreation** – Separate GVSU program but Psychology students can enroll in these electives. **These are content heavy on techniques, skills and tools that a recreational therapist would use**
 - a. **REC 313** – Physical Disabilities
 - b. **REC 315** – Recreation and Mental Health
 - c. **REC 316** – Older Adult
 - d. **REC 317** – Pediatrics



What skills are important for a Child Life Specialist to have? Communicating with children and families, active listening skills, the ability to think critically about clients' situations, time management skills, compassion, and the ability to keep emotional composure while working in this career are all important skills one should strive to have.

Employer Possibilities – Employed by hospitals, usually within large pediatric units.

*Average Salary - \$39,236 from Vhs Children Hospital of Michigan (2011) from Salarylist.com