



Child Life

TENNESSEE TECH

2026-2027 Child Life Graduate Program Handbook

Program Director

Cara Sisk, Ph.D., CCLS

A supplement to the Tennessee Tech University Student Handbook &
the Tennessee Tech College of Graduate Studies Student Handbook and Graduate Catalog

Table of Contents

Preface	4
Welcome & Introductions	4
Child Life Program Motto, Mission, Goals, & Outcomes	4
Program Motto	4
Program Mission	4
Program Goals	4
Student Learning Outcomes	5
Competency Based Education	6
Graduate Student Expectations	6
MS Degree Only or MS Degree and Experiential Learning	6
Admission Requirements	6
Monitoring Student Performance	9
Student Retention	10
Supervised Experiential Learning Documentation	11
Insurance Requirements	11
Liability for Safe Travel	11
Injury or Illness	11
Experiential Learning Work Schedule	12
Absence from Experiential Learning	12
Tardiness	13
Professional Communication Expectations	13
Drug Testing and Criminal Background Checks	13
Estimated Costs	13
Policy Regarding Students Replacing Employees	14
Compensation	14
Program Complaints	15
Prior Assessment of Supervised Experiential Learning Policy	16
Annual Assessment of Student Learning	17
Advisement and Registration	18
Program Retention and Remediation	18
Disciplinary/Termination Procedures	20
Effective August 2026	2

Assessment of Professionalism/Ethical Behavior.....	21
Graduation Requirements	21
Child Life Certification Eligibility Requirements	22
Verification of Student Identity.....	22
Withdrawal and Refund of Tuition and Fees	23
Affiliation Agreements & Preceptor Selection Criteria.....	23
Program Schedule, Vacations, Holidays, and Leave of Absence.....	24
Readmission/Reapplication	25
Online Course Participation Expectation	25
Program of Study Degree & Experiential Learning	25
Program of Study MS Degree Only	25
Protection of Privacy of Student Information.....	25
Student Access to Their Own Files	26
Access to Student Support Services.....	26
Assessment of Transfer Credit	26
Professional Dress Guidelines	27
Social Media/Networking.....	28
Employment of Students	29
Equitable Treatment.....	29
Certification Eligibility	30
Coursework Verification for Internship Application	30
Practicum & Internship Information.....	30
Application to Practicum	31
Application to Internship	32
Steps to Becoming a CCLS	33
Guidelines for Requesting Recommendation Letters	34
Suggestions for Obtaining a Child Life Practicum and Internship	35
Students Not Offered Practicum or Internship	35
Common Questions – Practicum and Internship.....	35
Appendix A	37
Appendix B	45
Appendix C	46

Preface

This handbook is to orient you to the program policies and procedures you are required to follow as a student enrolled in this graduate program. The program handbook is a supplement to the [Tennessee Tech University Student Handbook](#) and the Tennessee Tech University College of Graduate Studies [Student Handbook](#) and [Graduate Catalog](#).

These policies and procedures apply to all students, and this handbook makes further applications to students enrolled in the Child Life graduate program.

To be fully informed, you must read this program handbook, as well as, the Tennessee Tech University Student Handbook, the College of Graduate Studies Student Handbook and Graduate Catalog. These documents are reference items for you as enrolled graduate students.

The Child Life Graduate Program Handbook is also available on our website: [Child Life](#).

Welcome & Introductions

Welcome to the School of Human Ecology's Child Life graduate program!

The Child Life graduate program of study was first offered at Tennessee Technological University in August 2026. Our faculty and staff are excited that you chose our program to pursue your graduate education in child life.

Dr. Cara Sisk, Certified Child Life Specialist, is the Child Life Program Director. With eleven years of clinical experience at St. Jude Children's Hospital, Dr. Sisk served children, adolescents, and their families. She is passionate about the child life profession and honored to educate the next generation of child life specialists.

Dr. Caitlin Wharton, Certified Child Life Specialist, is the Child Life Program Clinical Coordinator. Dr. Wharton has served children, adolescents, and their families clinically for eight years, including six years at the University of New Mexico Children's Hospital, where she provided child life services in the Pediatric Emergency Department. Dr. Wharton is looking forward to working with students to help them prepare to enter the child life profession.

Child Life Program Motto, Mission, Goals, & Outcomes

Program Motto

Enhancing Psychosocial Care through Evidence-Based Practice

Program Mission

The Child Life Graduate Program delivers high-quality educational experiences designed to cultivate competent, confident professionals dedicated to addressing the psychosocial needs of children and families.

Program Goals

The Master of Science Degree in Child Life offers graduate students opportunities to enhance their academic knowledge for application to Child Life clinical practice.

GOAL 1. The MS in Child Life will prepare graduates to uniquely address the psychosocial needs of children and families, in healthcare and stressful life experiences, to enhance quality of life and foster positive health outcomes.

GOAL 1 Objectives:

1. At least 80% of students complete program requirements within 3 years.
2. At least 80% of program graduates who respond to exit surveys will indicate they feel more than adequately prepared to address the psychosocial needs of children and families.

GOAL 2: The MS in Child Life will prepare graduates to advance clinical practice through application of research to evidence-based practice.

GOAL 2 Objectives:

1. At least 80% of program graduates who respond to exit surveys will rate the quality of the Child Life graduate program as Good to Excellent.
2. At least 80% of program graduates who respond to exit surveys will indicate they feel more than adequately prepared to apply research to evidence-based clinical practice.
3. At least 75% of employers who respond to the employer survey will rate the quality of the child life graduates academic preparation for clinical practice as Good to Excellent.

Program goals will be assessed via student exit surveys upon graduation and employer surveys.

Student Learning Outcomes

The Association of Child Life Professionals (ACLP) publishes the [Child Life Competencies](#). The Child Life Competencies provide academic programs with the minimal level of acceptable practice as defined by the ACLP. The Competencies are organized into four domains:

- I. Care of Infants, Children, Youth and Families
- II. Professional Responsibility
- III. Education and Supervision
- IV. Research Fundamentals

The MS in Child Life courses are designed to incorporate these competencies with depth and breadth across the curriculum, utilizing a variety of learning strategies and assessment methods.

The following Student Learning Outcomes provide the foundation for the curriculum:

Graduates of this degree will:

1. develop critical inquiry and advocacy skills required for the provision of holistic child life practice and quality psychosocial care (assessed in HEC 6550 Professional Topics & Ethical Practice)
2. incorporate cultural competence in child life assessment and psychosocial interventions (assessed in HEC 6540 Child Life Intervention)
3. build interdisciplinary knowledge while integrating professionalism in practice (assessed in HEC 5500 Foundations of Child Life)
4. ensure ethical responsibility relevant to child life perspectives, policies, and practices (assessed in HEC 6550 Professional Topics & Ethical Practice)

5. effectively communicate learning, research, and best practices verbally and in writing (assessed in HEC 6515 Research in Child Life)
6. create supportive, therapeutic relationships with the children and families (assessed in HEC 6520 Families in Healthcare)

The Child Life Competencies are cross matched to the Syllabi and Assessment Methods on the document found in Appendix A.

Competency Based Education

The Child Life graduate program is a competency-based education program focusing on student mastery of the Child Life Competencies academically and through experiential learning.

Graduate Student Expectations

Child life graduate students are accountable to follow all policies and procedures, and failure to do so will result in disciplinary action including termination from the program. Disciplinary actions are provided later in this document.

Graduate students are expected to:

1. Know all policies and procedures in this handbook.
2. Professionally prepare for experiential learning opportunities by volunteering with children and families a minimum of 45 hours with one organization per semester, reviewing the practicum and internship syllabi, and completing mandatory preparation modules.
3. Practice punctuality and professional communication throughout graduate courses and experiential learning.
4. Abide in alignment with the Child Life Certification Commission's (CLCC) Child Life Code of Ethics.
5. Represent the Child Life graduate program through professional attitudes, behaviors, and appearance during academic courses, experiential learning opportunities, volunteer activities, conferences, and on campus.
6. Maintain confidentiality of all information.
7. Communicate professionally with faculty, staff, fellow students, and preceptors in experiential learning experiences.
8. Communicate unexpected changes in schedule with the Program Clinical Coordinator and preceptors in a respectable timeframe and accept program changes and consequences that may result.
9. Exhibit a professional, positive, and hardworking attitude in all aspects of the graduate program.
10. Submit all orientation materials and required experiential learning documents by the due date set by the Program Clinical Coordinator. Failing to meet this due date could alter the student's experiential learning opportunities.

MS Degree Only or MS Degree and Experiential Learning

The Child Life Graduate Program offers students a choice of two pathways.

- Degree Only – for Certified Child Life Specialists looking to enhance their academic education.
- Degree and Experiential Learning – for individuals pursuing child life academic education and clinical experiences required to become a Certified Child Life Specialist.

Admission Requirements

[Admission to the College of Graduate Studies](#) is open to anyone holding a bachelor's or master's degree from an accredited college or university. Foreign degrees must be equivalent to a U.S. bachelor's degree and must be accredited by its regional or national accreditation agency or Ministry of Higher Education. Applicants should have completed undergraduate or graduate work of sufficient quality and scope to enable them to successfully pursue graduate study. Tennessee Tech University offers equal educational opportunity to all persons, without regard to race, religion, sex, age, creed, color, national origin, or disability.

Students are admitted to Tennessee Tech University through a cooperative effort of the Graduate College and the departments, colleges, and schools of the University. When the Graduate College receives the student's application material, an official file is established. The department then reviews the application file and makes a recommendation to the Graduate College. The Graduate College notifies applicants when a decision is reached.

Applicants must submit the following for admission consideration:

1. Online application for graduate admission and the nonrefundable application fee.
2. Official transcripts of undergraduate and graduate credit from all institutions attended.
3. Undergraduate degrees from regionally accredited college or university accepted include human development and family science, family and consumer sciences, health sciences, nursing, social work, and psychology. Other undergraduate degrees not specifically listed here will be reviewed based on transcript content.
4. Prerequisite undergraduate coursework must include:
 - a. A minimum of 1 developmental course including ages 0-18 (early child, middle child, adolescent development). Grade of B or higher required.
 - i. Lifespan development courses will not be considered, because in-depth knowledge of children and childhood is required.
 - ii. Undergraduate Cumulative GPA of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale.
5. Volunteer/Work/Practicum Experience: Applicants must have a minimum of 50 hours of volunteer, practicum, or paid work experience in a child focused or child and family services setting, and experiences with children in healthcare settings supervised by a Certified Child Life Specialist are preferred.
6. References (2) – when the application is submitted, provide the contact information for two references. An email will then be sent to these references to complete an online recommendation form. At least one reference should be from a former college or university instructor with the second reference from someone who has observed the applicant interacting with children and adolescents. Both references must be able to speak to the applicant's potential for success in a child life graduate program. The application is not complete until your references submit these recommendation forms.
7. Applicants will indicate on the graduate application they are applying to only the Master of Science Degree in Child Life or both the Degree and the Experiential Learning Track – The Experiential Learning Track has additional admission requirements.
8. Resume – upload a professional resume (no more than 2 pages).
9. Personal Statement – upload a separate document, which includes the following: state why you have the knowledge, skills, abilities, and experiences to succeed in the child life graduate degree program. This will serve as a professional writing example and must use professional, formal language and tone, correct grammar, spelling, and syntax. This statement should demonstrate your interest in TN Tech's child life degree program and how it will help you meet your career goals. Limit the Personal Statement

to a maximum of 1,200 words or fewer and specifically address the following questions in the personal statement:

- a. Explain what a child life specialist is and the child life specialist's role and responsibilities on the healthcare team.
- b. What are your professional goals; elaborate on future career plans and the motivation for pursuing a MS in Child Life.
- c. In what ways will the MS in Child Life build upon your current knowledge, skills, and abilities?
- d. How have you prepared yourself for success in this graduate degree program?
- e. Elaborate on your unique story that motivates you to seek a child life graduate degree.

Notes:

1. Applicants determined to be competitive upon review of the application requirements will be invited to interview with the Program Director and an admissions team via an online platform (face-to-face) for further consideration in the selection process.
2. Applicants are selected on a competitive basis and, therefore, admission is not granted to all applicants who meet the minimum requirements.

Application deadline for degree seeking students varies based on the semester you wish to enroll. Application deadlines may be found on the College of Graduate Studies "How to Apply" section of the website.

Those interested in the experiential learning necessary to become a Certified Child Life Specialist, must apply by the December 15 deadline for a Fall start date. If a cohort does not fill, applications for a Fall start date will be accepted until April 15.

Additional Admission Requirements – Experiential Learning Track

In addition to the requirements for admission to the Master of Science in Child Life as stated above, applicants who want to also be admitted to the Experiential Learning Track must provide:

1. Evidence of Work/Volunteer Experience – documentation of 100 hours of work or volunteer experience in child focused or child and family services settings must be completed within four years of application. Of the 100 hours, at least 50 hours must be in a child life setting supervised by a Certified Child Life Specialist. The Experiential Track Supplemental Form must be completed to document these experiences. This form will be uploaded with the Graduate application.
2. Prerequisite coursework for applicants who do not have a Child Life Clinical Experience Verification Form from a Child Life Clinical Internship or are not Certified Child Life Specialists, the following prerequisite coursework must have been completed within five years from an accredited academic institution:
 - a. A minimum of 1 development course including ages 0-18 (early child, middle child, adolescent development). Grade of B or higher required. Lifespan development courses will not be considered, because in-depth knowledge of children and adolescence is required.
 - b. The Coursework Verification Form must be used to confirm coursework completion.
3. Personal Statement: In addition to the questions listed above for the Personal Statement, applicants for the Experiential Learning Track should include why they are pursuing the Certified Child Life Specialist (CCLS) credential in a minimum of 500 words and maximum of 1000 words.

Monitoring Student Performance

The TN Tech College of Graduate Studies has the following guidelines in place for probation and dismissal: A graduate student is required to maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least B (3.0) on all courses taken for degree purposes.

Credit toward a degree objective will be granted for any graduate course in which a grade of A, B, C, S, or SP (for thesis or dissertation) is assigned; however, not more than six (6) hours of C credit will be accepted. If a grade of D, U, F, WF, or NF is assigned in a degree-related course, the courses must be repeated; and both the original grade and the grade for the repetition will be counted in the cumulative average.

When a student's cumulative average on courses falls below 3.0, but not less than 2.0, the student will be placed on probationary Academic Standing. If the cumulative average falls below 2.0, the student will be dismissed.

Any graduate student placed on probationary Academic Standing at the end of the semester must return to Good Academic Standing by the end of the next enrolled semester.

If the term average, on all courses presented as part of the hours required for graduation, during any semester is less than 2.0, the student's record will be reviewed, and the student may be placed on probation or dismissed.

A graduate student will be dismissed from the graduate program if any one of the following conditions occurs:

1. The student's current or cumulative GPA falls below 2.0.
2. The student earns two grades of "F."
3. The graduate student fails to achieve Good Academic Standing by the end of the next enrolled semester following a semester that the graduate student was placed in probationary Academic Standing.

Please see the information below for performance monitoring and dismissal policies specific to the Child Life graduate program.

A graduate student who has been dismissed for unsatisfactory performance may request reinstatement through the appeal procedures in [TN Tech Policy 281: Graduate Dismissal, Reinstatement, and Appeal Procedures](#).

This information can be found in the [TN Tech College of Graduate Studies Catalog](#).

Regarding both monitoring student performance and retention/remediation procedures in the Child Life graduate program, the following sequence will be initiated, based on whether the unsatisfactory performance is in the academic or experiential learning setting.

The Program Director, Program Clinical Coordinator, and on-site preceptors have the responsibility for monitoring and reporting student performance. Regarding responsibility of reporting student performance in the Experiential Learning setting:

1. The child life specialist preceptor in the affiliating facility will notify the student of unsatisfactory performance orally and in writing.

2. The child life specialist or other preceptor in the affiliating institution shall notify the Program Director and the Program Clinical Coordinator about the student's unsatisfactory performance.
3. A conference will be scheduled and held to include the student, the affiliating facility's child life specialist, and the Child Life graduate Program Director and Program Clinical Coordinator. At this meeting, a written plan for improvement will be developed and signed by all the parties at the conference identifying the specific knowledge and skills that must be satisfactorily demonstrated and the expected timeframe for completion of the improvement plan. This timeframe may vary based on the experience, but students will typically be given 7-14 days to improve performance depending on each student's situation. Ultimately, the Child Life Program Director has the authority and responsibility to determine if a student (after two attempts at remediation) will not be successful in the graduate program. This meeting may be held virtually.
4. Students with minimal chance of success after two attempts at remediation will be removed from the Child Life Graduate Program Degree and Experiential Learning Track

If unsatisfactory performance is academic (as defined by the College of Graduate Studies policies):

1. The Program Director will explore tutorial support and remedial instruction available to the student.
 - a. Student support services available to the student include those available through TN Tech's provision of free tutorial support to all its students, including the Americans with Disabilities Act.
 - b. Any student who needs learning accommodation should inform the professors immediately at the beginning of the semester. The student is responsible for obtaining appropriate documentation and information regarding needed accommodations from the TN Tech Accessible Education Center and providing it to the professors early in the semester. The office information is:
 Location: Roaden University Center, 112
 Phone: (931) 372-6119
 Fax: (931) 372-6378
 Email: disability@tntech.edu
2. Depending upon what is needed by the student, further stipulations and remedial actions including a formal plan for improvement will be developed to facilitate continued improvement in performance. The plan will include a timeframe for improvement.
3. If performance improves to an acceptable level during the agreed upon time allotment as signed by the involved parties, the student will be allowed to continue in the Child Life graduate program.
4. Students with minimal chance of success after two attempts at academic remediation will be removed from the Child Life Graduate Program Degree and Experiential Learning Track. Students must also meet the minimum academic performance criteria specified by the College of Graduate Studies.

If the performance issue is not academic (unethical behavior, substance abuse, etc.):

1. The student may be dismissed from the degree and experiential learning tracks. The program will follow all university policies. The [Child Life Code of Ethics](#) will be used as the standard for professional behavior.
2. Unsatisfactory conduct includes failure to submit experiential learning materials by the deadline provided by the Program Clinical Coordinator and could result in disciplinary procedures and/or a delay in graduation should the student not be able to complete the required experiential learning hours in the semester the course is offered.

For additional information, please see the Disciplinary/Termination section of this handbook.

Student Retention

Effective August 2026

Formal and informal assessment of student learning occurs routinely. Assessment occurs in the form of assignments and supervised experiential learning assessments from preceptors. Each assignment has a rubric that states student expectations and grading criteria.

In supervised experiential learning, preceptors will complete assessments of student performance after each rotation. The procedure will include regular oral feedback from the preceptor to the student, completion of preceptor written evaluation of the student, and written evaluation of the site/preceptor by the student at the conclusion of the rotation. These are submitted electronically to the Child Life graduate Program Director and Program Clinical Coordinator for review.

Those students who receive scores below the benchmark of “C” for an assignment at any point in the semester will be counseled by the instructor of the course, Program Director, and/or Program Clinical Coordinator as appropriate for explanations and discussion regarding performance below the benchmarks.

Students will be given the opportunity for remediation within a specified timeframe as explained in the previous section.

Those students who routinely receive low scores from preceptors or on assignments will be counseled by faculty regarding ways to improve performance.

As noted in the “Monitoring Student Performance” section, students with minimal chance of success after two attempts at remediation for either academic or practicum performance will be removed from the Child Life Graduate Program Degree and Experiential Learning Track.

Supervised Experiential Learning Documentation

The Class of 2028 Home Base course on Canvas is used to manage supervised experiential learning. Students will upload required documentation necessary for experiential learning affiliating facilities, track their experiential learning on-site hours and schedules, and preceptor and student evaluations.

All experiential learning hours must be earned in the Child Life graduate program.

Insurance Requirements

Child Life graduate students are required to carry professional liability insurance. This insurance is available through a contract the university has with American Casualty Company, and students are billed for the insurance (approximately \$12.00) when they enroll in the experiential learning practicum courses.

Liability for Safe Travel

During all occasions that students take their own vehicle for experiences related to the Child Life Graduate program, students will be required to have automobile insurance that follows state laws where the vehicle is registered.

Injury or Illness

Students who are injured or become ill while at a supervised experiential learning site as part of the requirements for the Child Life Graduate program or other graduate course should notify their preceptor immediately and receive appropriate care (Emergency Room, Urgent Care, private physician, etc.).

In the event of a major injury, the Child Life Graduate Program Director should be notified. All costs associated with injuries or illnesses that occur while completing site supervised experiential learning (or other experiences as assigned within the Child Life graduate program) are the responsibility of the student. Students are required to show proof of health insurance prior to being placed at an experiential learning location to ensure they have medical coverage. TN Tech is not liable for injuries or health incidents that arise from the student spending time at experiential learning sites.

Experiential Learning Work Schedule

The student will participate in experiential learning according to the schedule assigned by the affiliating facility and will participate in their learning experiences as scheduled by the child life specialist or other preceptor.

Specific details related to policies relating to vacation, holiday and absences are as follows:

The Child Life graduate program will allow for 4 personal days which can be used for illness and other personal needs. It is considered a personal day if the student asks to be off during a semester in which they have a clinical experience and would otherwise be scheduled to work.

Experiential learning will be scheduled approximately 4 weeks prior to the students' start date. If requesting to use any of the 4 personal days, the Program Clinical Coordinator should be notified at least 6 weeks in advance of the first day of the clinical experience. It is also the student's responsibility to communicate the use of approved personal days with the on-site child life clinical experience coordinator or other preceptor at the affiliating institution and ensure the use of personal days does not result in the student earning less than the minimum number of hours required by the MS in Child Life Program or the affiliating facility.

If sick, students must notify the preceptor and Program Clinical Coordinator as soon as they are able.

Decisions regarding scheduling for HEC 6570: Child Life Practicum or Pre-Internship Experiential Learning and HEC 6575: Experiential Learning is a required component of certification to meet the competencies of child life practice set forth by the ACLP. The MS Degree in Child Life requires two experiential learning opportunities be completed during HEC 6570: Child Life Pre-Internship Experiential Learning, and HEC 6575: Child Life Clinical Experience. Due to the competitive nature of child life practicums/pre-internship experiences and child life internships, students will be required to complete preparation modules located in the Class of 2028 Home Base course on Canvas in order to prepare for these experiences prior to applying to any potential affiliating facility for experiential learning.

The graduate student is required to complete a minimum of 100 hours of supervised experiential learning in HEC 6570 and a minimum of 600 hours of supervised experiential learning in HEC 6575. If a preceptor dismisses the student early, this should be logged into the hour tracking on Canvas, and it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the minimum required number of on-site hours is met.

Absence from Experiential Learning

Any time a student needs to be absent from an affiliating institution (including inability to arrive at the rotation site due to weather), the student will notify the Child Life graduate Program Clinical Coordinator and the on-site child life clinical experience coordinator or other preceptor at the affiliating institution.

The student will be scheduled for additional hours per week until required hours and competencies are completed.

Tardiness

Students will receive a schedule of experiential learning hours at least one week prior to the start of each clinical experience from the clinical experience site preceptor. The start time for each day should be included on the schedule. Students are expected to check on parking and other considerations ahead of the first day of each clinical experience. Students are expected to be on time for their experiences. "On Time" is defined as 15 minutes early. Tardiness is defined as arriving at the start time or later and will not be tolerated. Students who will arrive late for a clinical experience must notify the preceptor immediately.

Professional Communication Expectations

As representatives of TN Tech, the Department of Human Ecology, and the Child Life Graduate Program, all students must communicate appropriately and respectfully with preceptors, professors, and fellow students both verbally and in writing. Emails should be professionally written using the following format: begin with a greeting, follow with a clearly written body, and conclude with a sign-off (such as Sincerely) your written name and position as a graduate student of the Child Life Graduate Program at TN Tech must be included. This practice represents the program well and prepares students for professional communications in their future career.

Drug Testing and Criminal Background Checks

Most healthcare facilities utilized as experiential learning sites require drug testing. TN Tech Child Life graduate students are required to comply with any drug testing required at an experiential learning location and are responsible for the cost of drug testing if not covered by facility. All Child Life graduate students must complete and pass a criminal background check prior to starting their experiential learning to adhere to clinical affiliation agreements. Background checks are completed through TrueScreen, and the cost is the responsibility of the Child Life graduate student.

Estimated Costs

Per the College of Graduate Studies at Tennessee Tech (May 2026):

Estimated [tuition](#) for Fall and Spring semesters for a 9-credit hour full-time course load:

\$5,921 for in-state

\$7,181 for out-of-state

\$12,455 for international out-of-state

Estimated tuition for summer semester for a 9-credit hour full-time course load:

\$5,891 for in-state

\$7,151 for out-of-state

\$12,425 for international out-of-state

For more information on current tuition and fees for the graduate program visit the Bursar's

Effective August 2026

website: [Fee Schedule](#)

Other anticipated fees:

1. Background Check with TrueScreen: estimated \$25.00 - \$50.00
 2. Student Liability Insurance: included as part of registration fees during the semester enrolled in experiential learning courses: approximately \$15.00 - \$20.00
 3. Proof of Health Insurance: varies based on personal monthly premium
 4. Current immunizations and proof of TB test: varies
 5. Drug Test: may be required at some facilities: varies
 - o Students will be placed at a variety of health care facilities within Tennessee and possibly surrounding states, depending on the student's location. Each healthcare facility has its own requirements for student volunteers. Some facilities require drug testing prior to beginning the experiential learning, and students should be prepared to submit to this drug testing and pay the testing costs.
 1. Textbooks: varies per semester.
 2. Travel costs: varies depending on the location of the experiential learning site.
 3. The Program Clinical Coordinator will work with each student to try to place them at the location most convenient for them that will provide them with the experience they need to achieve competencies. However, due to the competitive nature of child life experiential learning programs, students should be prepared to apply to multiple programs and go where these opportunities take them.
- [Association of Child Life Professionals Student Membership](#): \$65.00. It is strongly recommended that each student be a member of the Association of Child Life Professionals. Some course assignments will utilize the ACLP's website that are only accessible to members.
1. Attendance at Southeastern Association of Child Life Conference: approximately \$300, one-time (conference registration, one night hotel, transportation costs, and food)
 2. Laptop, if not already owned: varies
 3. Approximate cost of rent and utilities in Cookeville, TN: \$1,000 per month
 4. Physical Exam for medical clearance varies based on personal health insurance
 5. Fuel expense each semester: approximately \$500 can vary due to gas prices
 6. CPR/First Aid Certification: approximately \$45

Note: Extra costs may be incurred due to additional immunizations, drug testing, background check and other clinical experience requirements that are enforced by the individual supervised experiential learning sites.

Policy Regarding Students Replacing Employees

The purpose of child life student practicums and internships at various healthcare locations is to provide experiential learning opportunities under the supervision of a Certified Child Life Specialist. Under no circumstances are students allowed to replace employees.

The status of the student in the supervised experiential learning facility is that of a learner. They shall not replace regular staff or employees but will complete assignments and learn competencies under the professional Certified Child Life Specialist's supervision.

Compensation

Effective August 2026

Most experiential learning clinical experiences are unpaid.

Occasionally, students may receive a paid child life internship position.

Paid supervised experiential learning hours are allowed under the following guidelines:

The work experience must be relevant for the student's learning, practice, and mastery of Child Life Competencies in the internship and must occur within the timeframe of the experiential learning course. For example, a paid internship position must take place during the student's enrollment in HEC 6575: Child Life Clinical Experience.

All paid internship experiences must:

- Meet a set of competencies within the internship.
- Have a willing and qualified Certified Child Life preceptor as required by the Child Life Certification Commission in that internship as determined by the Program Clinical Coordinator.
- Have a preceptor willing to give experiences to meet competencies (shadowing, mentoring, observation, etc.) beyond hourly duties. For example, students may need to work unpaid hours to meet certain competencies.
- Have a preceptor willing for students to perform competencies and projects required for the practicum or internship course per the course syllabus.
- Have a university contract with the healthcare facility.
- Be understanding of other supervised experiential learning needs and hours within the child life clinical experience.

All potential competencies completed within a paid internship must be approved by the Program Director and the Program Clinical Coordinator as a sufficient supervised experiential learning site. The Program Clinical Coordinator will determine the number of approved hours counted toward the internship.

All prospective paid internships must be approved 4 weeks ahead of the clinical experience. This gives the opportunity for discussion of hours, competencies, and contracting. If done after this timeframe, it will not be considered.

Program Complaints

The TN Tech Student Complaint policy is found at: [Student Complaint](#)

Students who have a grievance with the Child Life graduate program are encouraged to initially meet with the involved faculty or staff to resolve the issue directly. If the issue is not resolved, the student may meet with the Program Director to resolve it. If the issue is not resolved, the student may present the grievance to the Director of the School of Human Ecology and if still unresolved, to or the Dean of the College of Agriculture and Human Ecology without fear of retaliation. Some grievances may be under the authority of the College and/or University and university policies for student complaints/grievances will be followed as specified in the [TN Tech Student Handbook](#).

The office of Student Affairs may facilitate the processing of student grievances as appropriate. There will be no retaliation toward any student who files a complaint. If a student suspects that retaliation has occurred, the same procedure for filing a complaint may be followed and/or the student may contact the office of Student Affairs directly at: [Student Affairs-Contact](#)

Preceptors of TN Tech Child Life graduate students who have concerns or complaints against TN Tech Child Life graduate students may contact the Program Director, Dr. Cara Sisk at 931-372-6017 or csisk@tntech.edu to discuss.

As an alternative, preceptors may contact the Interim Director of the School of Human Ecology, Dr. Samantha Hutson at 931-372-3157, or the Dean of the College of Agriculture and Human Ecology, Dr. Darron Smith at 931-372-3149.

Prior Assessment of Supervised Experiential Learning Policy

All experiential learning practicum hours must be completed within the Child Life Graduate program. The program does not accept experiential learning hours from other institutions, work experiences, or volunteer hours toward the required experiential learning hours for the program.

Some applicants may enter the Graduate Program in Child Life with prior education and experience. While we acknowledge the value of prior education, we are also committed to ensuring a fair and comprehensive learning experience for all students, which means that prior education cannot exempt students from courses or learning activities. Because alternative experiential learning hours are earned in each online course, no transfer credit is accepted in the Child Life graduate program.

Coursework or experiences required by an undergraduate curriculum will not be counted towards Assessment of Prior Learning credit. Assessment of Prior Learning credit is only awarded for an experience that is directly related to a child life practicum supervised experiential learning outlined in the Child Life graduate curriculum.

Assessment of Prior Learning allows Child Life graduate program students to replace up to 100 hours toward an in-healthcare supervised experiential learning/practicum course and to complete this minimum of 100 hours in an alternative setting in consultation with the Program Clinical Coordinator and Program Director.

If an Assessment of Prior Learning is granted, students are expected to complete the same number of supervised experiential learning hours as other students in the practicum course, which is a minimum of 100 hours on-site supervised experiential learning. On-site preceptors in a non-healthcare setting must meet the minimum requirements determined by the ACLP and the MS in Child Life Graduate Program.

Instructions for submission of Assessment of Prior Learning applications and required materials are available to students from the Program Clinical Coordinator or Program Director upon request. Assessment of Prior Learning application materials must be submitted to both the Program Clinical Coordinator and Program Director.

Submitted applications will be reviewed for Assessment of Prior Learning eligibility. Late or incomplete Assessment of Prior Learning applications will not be considered. Applicants are responsible for providing adequate documentation or evidence that they have sufficient knowledge and experience for which the credit is being sought. Additional documentation or clarification may be requested. Preceptors listed in the Assessment of Prior Learning application may be contacted to request verification of the applicant's activities and documentation provided in the application.

Tuition and fees for the program remain the same regardless of the amount of Assessment of Prior Learning credit awarded as students will complete the same amount of supervised practice hours in each practicum course as those students not receiving Assessment of Prior Learning credit.

Assignments will NOT be waived. The Child Life graduate program may award up to 100 hours of Assessment of Prior Learning credit per student.

All experiences must have been completed under the supervision of an on-site Certified Child Life Specialist preceptor who meets the minimum requirements outlined by the CLCC and the MS in Child Life Program. Self-employment experiences do not qualify for Assessment of Prior Learning.

Assessment of Prior Learning applications can be submitted after an applicant is officially admitted into the MS in Child Life Program. The application deadline is September 15 of the first fall semester.

The Program Clinical Coordinator and Program Director will review the application and provide a final decision as to how many (if any) supervised practice hours can be granted as Assessment of Prior Learning. Decisions will be provided within two weeks of application receipt.

The Assessment of Prior Learning Portfolio must include:

Assessment of Prior Learning Form: All sections must be completed (written summary of work performed, hours worked, site name, job title). The bottom of the form should be signed by the preceptor and include their name, title, and contact information.

Evaluation of the Student's Performance from the CCLS preceptor at the Experiential Learning Site: Provide an official Evaluation Form of Performance that includes competencies encountered that is signed by the CCLS preceptor or a Letter on official letterhead written by the CCLS preceptor that outlines the student's performance and evaluation for applicable competencies during the experiential learning.

Samples of Work:

Provide work samples to support that the competencies were met; may include projects, reports, presentations, assignments, etc.

Additional information may be requested, in which case the material must be submitted by the graduate student within 1 week of the request.

The decision regarding the Assessment of Prior Learning is final.

Annual Assessment of Student Learning

Assessment of student learning occurs in both the child life courses and clinical experiences through formative and summative assessments. When receiving feedback, each student can ask questions (via email, phone call, or virtual meeting) for clarification and understanding.

Formative evaluation techniques are used to assess knowledge gained from class activities, while summative evaluation techniques are implemented to assess students' ability to apply what they learned.

Summative evaluation activities include course projects, case studies, and simulation activities. Rubrics are given to students when projects are assigned to ensure that students are aware of project expectations. The rubrics are used to assign grades and to track competencies. Rubrics are also used in supervised experiential learning courses.

Formal assessment and an update regarding student progress on competencies occurs when each student is advised in the Fall and Spring semesters by the Program Director. Individual meetings occur in person or on Teams to ensure students receive personalized feedback about their progress and can ask questions. The Program Director follows up the Teams call with an advising note in TechConnect to document each advising session.

In addition, at the end of each semester, data regarding student progress on each competency will be evaluated by the Program Director and the Program Clinical Coordinator. Deficiencies or lack of progress will be immediately communicated to the student for follow-up, remediation, or support as needed.

Advisement and Registration

Academic advising for graduate students is coordinated through the Program Director. All students within the Child Life graduate program are required to meet, in-person or virtually, with the Program Director for an advising session prior to registration each semester. Students who fail to schedule and/or attend an advising session will not be provided with the PIN required for registration. The Program Director will communicate with each student about scheduling an advising session. Students are encouraged to communicate with the Program Director to ensure enrollment in required courses as advised.

Students who are experiencing academic difficulties should contact the Program Director for Information about resources to promote academic success. Students who need to change course schedules, including dropping or adding courses, should see the Program Director regarding the process and discuss the impact of these actions on their academic program and anticipated graduation date. If a graduate program student drops a course, it will delay graduation by at least one year.

Students should monitor the TN Tech academic calendar for course add, drop, and withdrawal dates. Students must also seek advice from Financial Aid before changing their course schedules to be fully informed of the impacts of dropping or adding courses to their semester.

Students are reminded that while the faculty and staff of the Child Life graduate program are available to assist students in the achievement of their academic goals, each student is responsible for knowing and meeting the degree requirements.

Program Retention and Remediation

Formal and informal assessment of student learning occurs routinely. Preceptors complete evaluations for each student after child life pre-internship/practicum and after each rotation during a child life internship and may have performance and progress reports regularly during each experiential learning experience. The procedure includes student meetings with the preceptor for oral discussions; completion of preceptor written evaluation of the student after completion of the experience as well as a written evaluation of the experience/preceptor by the student at the conclusion of the practicum or internship. These are submitted through Canvas under the Class of 2028 Home Base course for review by the Program Director and the Program Clinical Coordinator.

If a preceptor evaluation indicates that a student is not performing well, the Program Director will initiate the steps listed below to ensure early detection and intervention of academic difficulty.

Those students who routinely receive low scores from preceptors will be counseled by faculty regarding ways to improve performance.

Regarding both monitoring student performance and retention/remediation procedures in the Child Life graduate program, the following sequence will be initiated, based on whether the unsatisfactory performance is in the academic or experiential learning setting.

The Program Director, Program Clinical Coordinator, and Preceptor have the responsibility for monitoring and reporting student performance. Regarding responsibility of reporting student performance in the Experiential Learning setting:

1. The Certified Child Life Specialist in the affiliating facility will notify the student of their unsatisfactory performance orally and in writing.
2. The Certified Child Life Specialist in the affiliating institution shall notify the Program Director and the Program Clinical Coordinator about the student's unsatisfactory performance.
3. A conference will be scheduled and held to include the student, the affiliating facility's child life specialist or other preceptor, and the Child Life graduate Program Director and Program Clinical Coordinator. At this meeting, a written plan for improvement will be developed and signed by all the parties at the conference identifying the specific knowledge and skills that must be satisfactorily demonstrated and the expected timeframe for completion of the improvement plan. This timeframe may vary depending on the experience, but students will typically be given 7-14 days to improve performance depending on each student's situation. Ultimately, the Program Director has the authority and responsibility to determine if a student (after two attempts at remediation) will not be successful in the graduate program. This meeting may be held virtually.
4. Students with minimal chance of success after two attempts at remediation will be removed from the Child Life graduate program Degree and Experiential Learning Track.

If the unsatisfactory performance is academic (Unsatisfactory academic performance is defined by the College of Graduate Studies policies.):

1. The Program Director will explore tutorial support and remedial instruction available to the student.
 - A. Student support services available to the student include those available through TN Tech's provision of free tutorial support to all its students, including the Americans with Disabilities Act.
 - B. Any student who needs learning accommodation should inform the professor(s) immediately at the beginning of the semester. The student is responsible for obtaining appropriate documentation and information regarding needed accommodations from the TN Tech Accessible Education Center and providing it to the professor early in the semester. The office information is as follows:
Location: Roaden University Center, 112
Phone: (931) 372-6119
Fax: (931) 372-6378
Email: disability@tntech.edu
2. Depending upon what is needed by the student, further stipulations and remedial actions including a formal plan for improvement will be developed to facilitate continued improvement in performance. The plan may include a timeframe for improvement.

3. If performance improves to an acceptable level during the agreed upon time allotment assigned by the involved parties, the student will be allowed to continue in the Child Life graduate program;
4. Students with minimal chance of success after two attempts at academic remediation will be removed from the Child Life graduate program Degree and Experiential Learning Track. Students must also meet at least the minimum academic performance criteria specified by the College of Graduate Studies.

If the performance issue is not academic (unethical behavior, substance abuse, etc.):

1. The student may be dismissed from the degree and experiential learning tracks. The program will follow all university policies. The [Child Life Code of Ethics](#) will be used as the standard for professional behavior.
2. Unsatisfactory conduct includes failure to submit experiential learning materials by the deadline provided by the Program Clinical Coordinator and could result in disciplinary procedures and/or a delay in graduation should the student not be able to complete the required experiential learning hours in the semester the course is offered.

For additional information, please see the Disciplinary/Termination section of this handbook.

Disciplinary/Termination Procedures

The TN Tech College of Graduate Studies has the following guidelines in place for probation and dismissal:

1. A graduate student is required to maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least B (3.0) on all courses taken for degree purposes.
2. Credit toward a degree objective will be granted for any graduate course in which a grade of A, B, C, S, or SP (for thesis or dissertation) is assigned; however, not more than six (6) hours of C credit will be accepted. If a grade of D, U, F, WF, or NF is assigned in a degree-related course, the course must be repeated; and both the original grade and the grade for the repetition will be counted in the cumulative average.
3. When a student's cumulative average on courses falls below 3.0, but not less than 2.0, the student will be placed on probationary Academic Standing. If the cumulative average falls below 2.0, the student will be dismissed.
4. Any graduate student placed on probationary Academic Standing at the end of the semester must return to Good Academic Standing by the end of the next enrolled semester.
5. If the term average, on all courses presented as part of the hours required for graduation, during any semester is less than 2.0, the student's record will be reviewed, and the student may be placed on probation or dismissed.

A graduate student will be dismissed from the graduate program if any one of the following conditions occur:

1. The student's current or cumulative GPA falls below 2.0.
2. The student earns two grades of "F."

3. The graduate student fails to achieve Good Academic Standing by the end of the next enrolled semester following a semester that the graduate student was placed in probationary Academic Standing.

Please see the information below for performance monitoring and dismissal policies specific to the Child Life graduate program.

A graduate student who has been dismissed for unsatisfactory performance may request reinstatement through the appeal procedures in [TN Tech Policy 281 \(Graduate Student Dismissal, Reinstatement, and Appeal Procedures\)](#).

This information can be found in the [TN Tech College of Graduate Studies Catalog](#).

In addition, per the Child Life graduate program, reasons for dismissal of a student include but are not limited to:

- A. Repeated unsatisfactory academic performance or supervised practice performance evaluations. Please see the specific guidelines above.
- A. Excessive/blatant absenteeism.
- B. Excessive and/or blatant violations of University or Child Life policies and procedures or those of a supervised practice facility.
- A. Justifiable dismissal from a supervised practice facility.
- B. Unacceptable behavior, as outlined in this handbook or by the ACLP Code of Ethics.

Assessment of Professionalism/Ethical Behavior

Professionalism and ethical behavior are defined throughout this handbook, and by the following papers provided by the Child Life Certification Commission and the Association of Child Life Professionals:

- [Child Life Code of Ethics](#)
- [Standards of Clinical Practice](#)

In addition, the following competencies and performance indicators will be assessed by the preceptors to monitor professionalism and ethics:

Competency 1.D: The ability to provide a safe, therapeutic, and healing environment for infants, children, youth, and families.

Competency 2.A: The ability to practice within the scope of professional and personal knowledge and skill base.

Competency 2.B: The ability to continuously engage in self-reflective professional child life practice.

Competency 5.B: The ability to implement child life services within the structure and culture of the work environment.

Please note that this may not be an exhaustive list of measures of ethics and professionalism.

Graduation Requirements

To earn the Master's Degree in Child Life the student must:

- Complete all graduate courses and experiential learning hours
- Maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher.
- Receive a YES on the Child Life Certification Clinical Experience Verification Form.
- Perform in a professional and ethical manner.

Graduation information is available in the [TN Tech College of Graduate Studies Catalog](#)

Additional details relating to graduation can be obtained from following website: [Registrar's Office](#)

Child Life Certification Eligibility Requirements

The Child Life Certification Commission (CLCC) requires individuals to meet the following requirements to establish eligibility for Child Life Certification:

1. Individuals are required to complete the academic requirements for certification, including both coursework and degree requirements and have received a “Completed” for each academic requirement as outlined by the CLCC’s Eligibility Assessment.
2. Students are required to have completed a Child Life Clinical Internship under the direct supervision of a Certified Child Life Specialist who meets the requirements set forth by the CLCC for internship supervision and have received a “Completed” for the Child Life Internship requirement on the CLCC’s Eligibility Assessment.
3. All areas of the CLCC’s Eligibility Assessment must show “Completed” for Certification Eligibility to be established and for individuals to register for the Child Life Certification Exam.

The Child Life Course Verification must be initiated by each student via the CLCC’s Certification Eligibility system. When students have completed HEC 5500 and grades are officially posted to transcripts, students may initiate the course verification phase of certification eligibility. Students will enter the name and contact information of the child life faculty member who taught this course, and the instructor will receive an email notification to complete the electronic verification for the student.

The signed Child Life Certification Commission Clinical Experience Verification Form documents that an individual has completed the requirements of child life clinical internship supervised by CCLS preceptors. The verification form allows students to establish eligibility to take the Child Life Professional Certification Examination for child life upon completion of the Graduate Program. It indicates completion of child life clinical internship requirements.

Verification forms can be signed only by the supervising CCLS preceptors.

The Child Life Clinical Internship will issue the verification form as soon as possible after a student completes the clinical internship. In addition to submitting a copy to the CLCC’s Certification Eligibility Assessment system, each graduate should keep an original signed verification statement in a secure place as a permanent record.

For additional information on Child Life Certification Eligibility, please visit the [ACLP](#) website or the [Child Life Professional Certification Candidate Manual](#).

Verification of Student Identity

In accordance with the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA)(Public Law 110-315), Federal Requirement 34 CFR §602.17(g), and HLC Policy Number FDCR.A.10.050, institutions offering distance or correspondence education must have processes to establish that the student who registers in such courses is the same student who participates in and receives academic credit.

The following institutional practices are identified by the HEOA/HLC guidelines as acceptable practices for verifying student identity:

- A secure login and passcode
- New or other technologies and practices

During the application and admission process, student identity is vetted in accordance with standard practices. Upon matriculation, each student receives a unique and secure Tennessee Tech University network user account. This network user account allows the student to authenticate into the learning management system (Canvas) and email. All systems are secured in accordance with industry best practices. As part of the activation process, each student must read and accept the terms of the Authorized User agreement, which explains the terms of use of the network user account, including:

Federal Compliance - Verification of Student Identity in Online Learning

- Network user account credentials may not be shared or given to anyone other than the user to whom they were assigned
- User responsibilities for keeping account credentials secure
- Disciplinary action for violating terms of the agreement

The Child Life graduate program also requires that students participate in various meetings, both synchronously and asynchronously throughout the program, including a one-time on campus orientation prior to the fall semester start date. Other meetings will be held as specified by the individual faculty. Students are expected to participate in all meetings.

Withdrawal and Refund of Tuition and Fees

The TN Tech policy for withdrawal and refund of tuition and fees can be found at the following link: [Registrar's Office - Withdrawing](#)

Affiliation Agreements & Preceptor Selection Criteria

An affiliation agreement is obtained for all experiential learning sites. Affiliation agreements must be signed by all parties (university and agency) before students may start hours at that site. Ongoing site evaluation will occur through student evaluations of the site and preceptors, correspondence between the Program Clinical Coordinator, Program Director, and the primary preceptor, and observations of the Program Clinical Coordinator or other faculty visiting the site.

Supervised experiential learning has two components: a child life practicum and a child life internship. Students can pursue a child life practicum or internship in any geographic location that they choose. All preceptors must at minimum meet the CLCC's and the MS in Child Life Program's requirements for clinical supervision, adhere to the ACLP Standards of Practice including the CLCC's Code of Ethics, and be in good standing with the CLCC, and be able to provide experiences necessary to achieve the competencies required for experiential learning.

It typically takes approximately six-eight weeks to complete a new clinical affiliation agreement, but it may take longer, depending on the facility.

The primary preceptor must meet the CLCCs and the MS in Child Life Program's requirements for clinical supervision. This includes, but is not limited to, a minimum of 2000 clinical hours worked for child life

practicum/pre-internship preceptors, and a minimum of 4000 clinical hours worked for child life intern preceptors.

After each clinical experience, the student will evaluate the site and the preceptors.

The affiliation agreements are maintained by the Child Life Graduate Program Director, the Program Clinical Coordinator, and TN Tech's Purchasing and Contracts department and are reviewed annually for expiration dates. In addition, the Program Clinical Coordinator will evaluate each site annually based on both preceptor and student evaluations and during visits to the supervised experiential learning sites.

Program Schedule, Vacations, Holidays, and Leave of Absence

The academic year at Tennessee Tech University is divided into three consecutive terms: Fall Term, Spring Term, and Summer Term, each of which is 15 weeks long. All official academic events for the academic year are published in the academic calendar. The TN Tech academic calendar can be found at: [TN Tech Academic Calendar](#)

The TN Tech Child Life graduate program schedule follows the university calendar with classes offered in fall, spring, and summer sessions. Holidays are determined by the university. Students participate in experiential learning courses in the Summer 1 (HEC 6570 pre-internship/practicum) and Spring 2 (HEC 6575 internship) semesters. During these semesters, the students' experiential learning practice hours are similar to the assigned preceptor. During clinical rotations, students can expect to work approximately 40 hours per week.

The graduate student is required to complete a minimum of 100 hours of supervised experiential learning in HEC 6570 practicum course and a minimum of 600 hours in HEC 6575. If a preceptor dismisses the student early, this should be logged into Canvas, and it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the minimum required on-site hours are met.

In addition, to prepare students for experiential learning opportunities and for entry into the child life profession, students are expected to participate in one volunteer experience with children or families each semester (fall, spring, and summer) for a minimum of 45 hours each semester while they are enrolled in the MS in Child Life Program with the exception of the semesters students are enrolled in HEC 6570:

Practicum/Pre-Internship Experience and HEC 6575: Child Life Clinical Experience This volunteer experience must only include hours from one organization, and the organization must be different for each semester.

- It is the student's responsibility to find these opportunities each semester, complete the volunteer requirements as to participation and hours, and complete the required documentation.
- Verification for these volunteer hours must be uploaded to Canvas at the end of each semester under the "Volunteer Hours Documentation" module in the Class of 2028 Home Base course.
- If assistance is needed in finding volunteer experiences, it is the student's responsibility to coordinate with the Program Clinical Coordinator in the first two weeks of each semester, so there is enough time to locate, secure, and complete volunteer hours.

The Child Life Graduate Program Director and faculty are available to students by phone and email. In the event the Child Life graduate Program Director were to take a temporary leave of absence, an appropriately qualified member of the Human Ecology faculty would be appointed to cover the duties of the Child Life graduate Program Director during that absence.

Students may apply for a leave of absence. Leaves of absence may be granted for a period of up to six months. A written request stating the dates of the absence must be submitted to the Program Director as far in advance as possible. The decision to grant or deny a leave of absence is made on an individual basis. If the request for a leave of absence is related to a medical issue, appropriate documentation from a medical provider is required.

If a leave of absence is granted, a written agreement will be created and signed by the student, Program Director and Program Clinical Coordinator. A plan and timeline would be made for the student to complete the required supervised experiential learning hours and coursework. The student will be required to satisfactorily complete all coursework, supervised experiential learning, and assignments and meet the current established competencies for the Child Life graduate program to be eligible for program completion.

Students are encouraged to complete the graduate program within three years from the start date of the program year they are accepted. Each course is offered only once during the academic year; therefore, any departure from completing a course in its planned sequence will result in a one-year delay in completing the course, the remaining program requirements, and the year of graduation.

Readmission/Reapplication

As stated in the TN Tech Graduate Catalog, if a student has not been active in the graduate program for more than a year, a readmission form must be filed and approved by the Dean of the graduate school prior to re-enrollment. A student who has applied for graduate study and is admitted, may defer enrollment for up to one year. If enrollment is not activated at the end of one year, the student must reapply and be readmitted to the program.

Online Course Participation Expectation

It is expected that students will actively participate in online classes and provide the faculty with a reason for any absence. Failure to participate in class can affect students' grades. At the beginning of the course each faculty member will provide a written attendance policy and expectations (including clinical experiences where applicable) for the course so that all students may be fully informed of their responsibilities, including penalties that may be imposed for failing to meet these responsibilities. Responsibilities may include volunteer work, synchronous Teams meetings, etc.

Program of Study Degree & Experiential Learning

The Child Life graduate program coursework and clinical experience courses must be taken in a planned sequence. In addition, each course is offered only once during the academic year, therefore, any departure from completing a course in its planned sequence will result in a one-year delay in completing the course, the remaining program requirements, and the year of graduation.

Program of Study MS Degree Only

Those students enrolled in the M.S. only track have the option to take courses on a part-time basis. Those enrolled in the Degree and Experiential Learning Track are required to follow the Program of Study specified for Child Life Degree and Experiential Learning Track students above.

Protection of Privacy of Student Information

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student information. TN Tech takes the privacy of student information very seriously. The complete policy statement of “Privacy Rights of Students” is available online in the Student Handbook and can be viewed at: [TN Tech Student Handbook](#)

Student Access to Their Own Files

Child Life graduate program student files are maintained by the Program Director and stored in a locked and secured location. Access to the Child Life graduate student files is limited to only the Child Life Graduate Program Director, faculty, and staff. Information contained within each student file may include but is not limited to academic advising notes, program of study progress, and assessment of competency achievements. This information is kept digitally on a password protected computer. Child Life graduate students may view their files upon request and schedule a time to view the file with the Program Director.

The student may not remove any material from their personal record; however, they may make a request to correct information or to insert a statement of disagreement in their file by writing to the Child Life Graduate Program Director. If the student's correction is not accepted, the Program Director will notify the student and include an explanation for the denial of the correction. If the correction is accepted, it will be added to the record with appropriate documentation by the Program Director.

Access to Student Support Services

The Office of Student Affairs at TN Tech serves as a liaison between administrative and academic faculty and staff and the student. For more information, visit: [Office of Student Affairs](#)

Campus Health Services provides medical care through an outpatient facility staffed by licensed physicians and nurse practitioners. Services include a general medical clinic, allergy and immunizations, preventative care, and referrals as needed. A valid current university student ID card is required to access services. More details are found at: [Health Services](#)

The TN Tech Counseling Center offers services such as personal counseling, academic counseling, career counseling, testing, campus outreach, and consultation services free of charge to enrolled students. More information is found at: [Counseling Center](#)

The Office of Financial Aid website provides information for students related to financial aid at: [Financial Aid](#)

Students have access to the TN Tech Volpe Library system. This resource can be found at: [Volpe Library](#)

Assessment of Transfer Credit

Only students in the degree only track can request transfer credit. Students who request to transfer graduate course credits from an accredited institution to Tennessee Tech must request that the institution sends official transcripts directly to TN Tech. Official transcripts must include all grades.

The Child Life Graduate Program Director, will determine, at their sole discretion, what transfer coursework is eligible for transfer to the student's program of study, provided the department's decision follows SACSCOC Accreditation Standard 3.6.3, which stipulates that 33% of the credits earned toward a degree be completed at Tennessee Tech.

For a request for transfer credit to be considered, the student must submit the following:

1. A syllabus from the course taken at a previous university;
2. Examples of completed assignments; and
3. An official transcript to the College of Graduate Studies.

The student will be required to discuss these materials with the Program Director. The meeting may take place virtually, but the requested materials must be sent prior to the meeting. The coursework transferred or accepted for credit toward a graduate degree must have a minimum grade of “B” in each course.

Please see the assessment of prior learning policy for information regarding gaining credit for past site CCLS supervised experiential learning.

Professional Dress Guidelines

Professional attire and appearance are an expectation, not an option. As representatives of the Child Life graduate program, the School of Human Ecology, and Tennessee Tech University, students must present a professional appearance during any clinical experience including but not limited to (a) visits to prepare for clinical experience in an agency; (b) participating in observational experiences; (c) conducting interviews and assessments in the community; or (d) attending professional seminars, workshops, or meetings.

In general, business professional or business casual attire must be worn, unless otherwise specified by the affiliating facility. Clothing should be in good condition. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Shirt or sweater with sleeves
- Closed toe, low-heeled or flat shoes
- Khaki or dress pants no shorter than 1” above the ankle or skirt no shorter than 2” above the knees.

At no time should a student attend a clinical or practicum experience dressed unprofessionally. Examples of unprofessional appearance and attire include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Jeans or denim of any color style
- Sweatpants, sportswear
- Shorts
- Tank tops, or spaghetti strap tops
- Visible undergarments
- Visible abdomen, cleavage, or buttocks
- Disheveled clothing
- Dirty shoes
- Flip-flops or other open-toed shoes or sandals

Professional Dress for Success

Additionally, hair should be clean and styled in such a manner that it does not interfere with the objectives of the clinical experience, including patient contact. Jewelry, tattoos, and visible piercings should be aligned with each clinical site’s dress code standards. Nails should be clean, well-groomed, and of an

appropriate length. Polish, if permitted, should not be chipped. Artificial nails are prohibited due to infection risks. Perfumes and colognes are not permitted during clinical experiences because patients may find scents disturbing or nauseating.

Students are required to display appropriate identification, as defined by the affiliating facility, at all times during experiential learning opportunities. Students are also responsible for having the required equipment needed for clinical or practicum experiences (notebook, pens, etc.).

Any exceptions to these guidelines must be approved prior to the clinical experience by preceptors or the Program Clinical Coordinator.

Social Media/Networking

Students enrolled in the Program are required to follow these professional statements from ACLP and HIPAA on social media.

From ACLP: [Utilizing Ethical Tenets and the Child Life Code of Ethics to Navigate Social Networking](#)

Health Information Privacy Accountability Act - HIPAA of 1996 (P.L. 104-191)

Students enrolled in the Child Life graduate program are required to follow these guidelines regarding social media and online social networking throughout their entire program of study until graduating or leaving the program.

1. Be cognizant of the potential impact of each post made, with the understanding that patients, classmates, instructors, employers, and other personal or professional contacts may view an individual's online activity as a reflection of the individual's career as well as the child life profession in general.
1. Stay informed about privacy settings of the social media sites they utilize, as privacy settings often change.
2. Utilize social networking sites by actively maintaining an awareness of how their professionalism may be affected by friends' and peers' usage of the same sites.
3. Students should restrict their personal activity to family and friends and maintain a second option for their "public face" for colleagues, classmates, and peers while in office. This is also recommended for students to maintain a separation of their personal lives from their professional lives.
4. Not share, post, or otherwise disseminate any information, that can identify a patient, or in any way violate a patient's rights of privacy. Limiting access through privacy settings is not sufficient to ensure privacy of patients.
5. Never refer to anyone in a disparaging manner, even if the person cannot be identified with the information stated.
6. Never make threatening, harassing, sexually explicit, or derogatory statements regarding any person's race, ethnicity, gender, age, citizenship, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, religious beliefs, political views, or educational choices.
7. Never make disparaging remarks about any college, university, or affiliated facilities, including the students, faculty members, and staff within the Child Life graduate program or University in general.
8. Not post content or otherwise speak on behalf of any college, university, Child Life graduate or other student association unless authorized to do so.

9. Remember that standards of professionalism are the same online as in any other circumstances.
10. Not share or post information or photos gained through the health professional-patient relationship.
11. Maintain professional boundaries in the use of electronic media. Online contact with patients blurs this boundary.
12. Never take, or post from others, any photos, or videos of patients on personal devices, including cell phones
13. Promptly report a breach of confidentiality or privacy to Child Life graduate faculty as soon as discovered.

Employment of Students

There is no policy limiting the number of hours a student enrolled in the Child Life graduate program may be employed, since the ability to handle the combined responsibilities of college and employment depend upon the individual. However, students are strongly advised not to exceed a total of 40 clock hours per week, including employment, coursework, volunteer opportunities, and clinical experiences.

Students who fail to meet the established academic standards in the Child Life Graduate Program due to employment will not receive special consideration. Therefore, students who need to work should discuss their course load with their advisors before risking academic success.

In certain situations, students may need to temporarily defer academic coursework for a period, choose part-time academic status and/or take advantage of various Financial Aid options such as graduate assistantships, loans, and scholarships.

Those students enrolled in the Degree and Experiential Learning Track should refer to the leave of absence policy mentioned above, as they are required to be enrolled as a full-time student.

Equitable Treatment

The Child Life Graduate Program follows Tennessee Tech's policies regarding equitable treatment of students. The program expects that anyone representing Tennessee Tech's program, including preceptors, would abide by these policies.

These policies include:

1. [TN Tech's Policy 141: Prohibited Discrimination and Harassment](#). It states:

Tennessee Tech is committed to maintaining an inclusive community that recognizes and values the inherent worth of every person, fosters tolerance, sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect and encourages each individual to strive to reach his/her own potential.

Tennessee Tech does not condone and will not tolerate Discrimination or Harassment against any individual on the basis of race, religion, color, creed, sex, age (as applicable), ethnic or national origin, genetic information, disability, veteran status, and any other bases protected by federal and state civil rights law.

Tennessee Tech is committed to ensuring that all individuals have equal access to its employment opportunities and educational programs, services, and activities.

2. The program also follows [TN Tech's Policy 604: Healthy Workplace Policy](#). It states: Employees shall treat all other employees, students, and visitors with dignity and respect. No employee shall engage in threatening, violent, intimidating, or other abusive conduct or behaviors.

Certification Eligibility

The coursework and experiential learning requirements outlined by the CLCC for Certification Eligibility are built into the MS in Child Life Program at Tennessee Tech University. Students will be eligible to register for the Child Life Certification Exam after successful completion of the MS in Child Life Program Degree and Experiential Learning Track, with the prerequisite child development course included, and after submitting the required documentation to the CLCC through the [Eligibility Assessment](#).

Coursework Verification for Internship Application

The CLCC requires students to complete an Eligibility Assessment to verify that students have completed the required coursework to apply for a Child Life Internship. The Eligibility Assessment has a one-time \$80 fee and requires the submission of coursework, unofficial transcripts, and the completed Child Life Course Verification Form. During the second semester of the MS in Child Life Program, students will begin the coursework verification portion of the Eligibility Assessment. Students who successfully complete the Program of Study for the MS in Child Life Program Degree and Experiential Learning Track, as outlined in the handbook (Appendix B), will have completed all coursework required to apply for internship as outlined by the CLCC.

Practicum & Internship Information

The purpose of experiential learning is to prepare students to enter the field of child life upon completion of their educational program. Experiential learning includes opportunities for observation, application of knowledge and theory, and integration of knowledge and theory in real-world situations to prepare for future clinical child life practice. Experiential learning is a required component of certification under the guidelines set forth by the Child Life Certification Commission (CLCC). The MS in Child Life Program at Tennessee Tech University requires two experiential learning components: a child life practicum or pre-internship experience and a child life internship.

Child life practicum/pre-internship experience and internship opportunities are competitive. Larger hospitals often receive 80-100 child life internship applications per semester and accept two students per semester. Due to this competitiveness, students are expected to be proactive and prompt with the completion of all assigned materials associated with experiential learning. Listed final deadlines are intended to ensure materials for practicum and internship programs are complete and ready for submission on time. Incomplete applications or applications submitted after a program's or the ACLP's deadlines are typically not considered by programs because this is seen as unprofessional and a reflection of poor work quality. Students are expected to be aware of the final deadlines listed on Canvas and in Orientation materials and are expected to meet these deadlines. Many deadlines and program-specific requirements for child life practicums/pre-internship experiences and internships are outside of the control of this program. Do not wait until the last minute to turn in assigned materials or to complete required volunteer hours. Doing so risks not meeting a deadline or requirement that may affect your ability for internship acceptance during the expected semester.

Many child life practicums/pre-internship experiences and internships also require volunteer experience with children and families in a variety of settings. As previously stated, students in the MS in Child Life Program are

Effective August 2026

required to participate in one volunteer experience with children or families for a minimum of 45 hours each semester. This volunteer experience must include:

1. Hours from one organization a semester
2. The organization must be different for each semester.

It is the student's responsibility to find these opportunities each semester, complete the volunteer requirements as to participation and hours, and fill out the required documentation. Verification for these volunteer hours must be uploaded to Canvas at the end of each semester under the "Volunteer Hours Documentation" module in the Class of 2028 Home Base course. If assistance is needed in finding volunteer experiences in your area, please let the Program Clinical Coordinator know in the first two weeks of each semester so there is enough time to find and complete volunteer hours. These experiences will not only help prepare students for their experiential learning opportunities but help them be competitive during the application process.

Child life practicum/pre-internship experiences and internship opportunities are available at many different locations across the country. Students can pursue a child life practicum/pre-internship experiences or internship at any location that offers a child life practicum/pre-internship experience or internship, as long as the facility and primary preceptor meet the requirements of the CLCC and the MS in Child Life Program for experiential learning precepting. However, placement, deadlines, and program-specific requirements for these outside facilities are outside of the control of this program. Students wishing to complete the Degree and Experiential Learning Track of the MS in Child Life Program should be prepared to apply to multiple locations for practicum/pre-internship experience and internship, and to go where these opportunities may take them. More information about the [CLCC](#) and [child life internships](#) can be found on their website.

Application to Practicum

A child life practicum experience is the first part of the Experiential Learning Track of the MS in Child Life program. Many children's hospitals offer child life practicums under the supervision of a Certified Child Life Specialist. A practicum program is designed to prepare students to apply for a child life internship. As stated above, students can pursue a child life practicum at any location that offers a child life practicum, as long as the facility and primary preceptor meet the requirements of the CLCC and the MS in Child Life program for experiential learning preceptors.

Final deadlines to turn in documentation and materials in preparation for applying to child life practicum programs, found in Appendix C, occur throughout the first semester of the MS in Child Life program. The final deadline reflects the latest a student can turn in the required documentation, but students are encouraged to turn in materials before the deadline and not wait until the last minute. Some of the required materials can take time to gather, so plan accordingly and leave enough time to gather and turn in documentation prior to the final deadline. Required documentation will be submitted via Canvas. If a practicum program has program-specific requirements for application, it is the student's responsibility to communicate this to the Program Clinical Coordinator so that these requirements can be met prior to program deadlines. While these submissions are not for a grade, failure to meet these final deadlines may result in not being able to participate in a practicum or internship during the expected semester and will delay graduation.

Each child life practicum program will have their own application to complete, and each program may request additional materials specific to their program. These applications and requested materials can be found on each child life practicum program's website. Students are required to submit a list of the practicum programs

to which they wish to apply via Canvas to the Program Clinical Coordinator and to include any program specific application requirements or deadlines on this list. Drafts of all applications must be submitted by the posted final deadlines via Canvas for feedback and the Program Clinical Coordinator will review and provide feedback on updated and re-submitted drafts until the final deadline for final application drafts. Do not submit your final draft of your application to your practicum programs until it has been reviewed and approved by the Program Clinical Coordinator.

In preparation for the child life practicum experience, experiential learning preparation modules are provided on Canvas throughout the first semester of the program. These preparation modules will cover topics such as preparing practicum applications, interviewing for a practicum, preparing for a practicum, etc. Preparation modules will be found on Canvas under the "Modules" section in the Class of 2028 Home Base course. Students are expected to complete these preparation modules in their entirety, including assignments, to prepare for practicums. Failure to complete these modules could result in not being able to participate in experiential learning opportunities during the expected semester and will delay graduation.

Application to Internship

A child life internship is the second part of the experiential learning track of the MS in Child Life program. Many children's hospitals offer child life internships. An internship is designed as the last experiential learning step prior to taking the Child Life Certification Exam and entering the child life profession. Students can pursue a child life internship at any location that offers a child life internship, as long as the facility and primary preceptor meet the requirements of the CLCC and the MS in Child Life program for experiential learning preceptors.

The MS in Child Life program participates in the Southeastern ACLP (SEACLP) Internship Match Pilot Program for Child Life Internship. More information about this program and a current list of participating internship sites can be found on their website, southeasternchildlife.org, or on their Instagram page, @seacplp. Students are encouraged to take advantage of the Internship Match Pilot Program.

Final deadlines to turn in documentation and materials in preparation for applying to child life internship programs, found in Appendix C, occur throughout the second semester of the MS in Child Life program. The final deadline reflects the latest a student can turn in the required documentation, but students are encouraged to turn in materials before the deadline and not wait until the last minute. Some of the required materials can take time to gather, so plan accordingly and leave enough time to gather and turn in documentation prior to the final deadline. Required documentation will be submitted via Canvas. If an internship program has program-specific requirements for application or if application deadlines differ from SEACLP or the [ACLP](#), it is the student's responsibility to communicate this to the Program Clinical Coordinator so that these requirements can be met in a timely fashion. While these submissions are not for a grade, failure to meet these final deadlines may result in not being able to participate in a practicum or internship during the expected semester.

The [Eligibility Assessment](#) is also required to apply for most, if not all, child life internship programs to show the applicant meets the academic requirements to participate in a child life internship. This process has a one-time \$80 fee and requires the submission of coursework, unofficial transcripts, and the completed online Child Life Course Verification. This process can take time for the Committee to review the submitted documents, so it is imperative that students submit materials by the posted final deadlines. After the CLCC's initial review of students submitted Eligibility Assessments, students will update their Eligibility Assessments on the ACLP's website to reflect completed coursework as they move through the program.

Most child life internship sites require the ACLP's [Internship Readiness Common Application](#). The Internship Readiness Common Application includes 3 parts: 1) the Common Application fillable PDF (often noted at the "Common Application"); 2) the Eligibility Assessment; and 3) unofficial transcripts. Drafts of the common application will be due throughout the second semester of the MS in Child Life Program for review and feedback by the Program Clinical Coordinator. These drafts should be submitted by their posted final deadlines, proofread, and free of grammatical and spelling mistakes. The Program Clinical Coordinator will continue to review updated and re-submitted drafts until the posted final deadline for the "Common Application Final Draft," found on Canvas. Do not submit final drafts of your Internship Readiness Common Application to internship programs until it has been reviewed and approved by the Program Clinical Coordinator.

In preparation for the child life internship experience, there will be experiential learning preparation modules provided on Canvas throughout the first semester of the program. This preparation module will cover topics such as preparing the CLCC Eligibility Assessment, preparing the ACLP Common Application, interviewing for an internship, preparing for an internship, etc. Preparation modules will be found on Canvas under the "Modules" section in the Class of 2028 Home Base course. Students are expected to complete these preparation modules in their entirety to prepare for an internship, including assignments. Failure to complete these modules could result in not being able to participate in experiential learning opportunities during the expected semester and will delay graduation.

Steps to Becoming a CCLS

The CLCC has determined six steps to becoming a CCLS.

1. Start [Eligibility Assessment](#)

- The Eligibility Assessment is used to keep records and to verify that individuals meet the academic and clinical requirements set forth by the CLCC prior to receiving Certification of Eligibility. The Certification of Eligibility is required to register for the Child Life Certification Exam.
- Students in the MS in Child Life Degree and Experiential Learning Track are required to begin their Eligibility Assessment no later than early second semester and to update the Assessment after receiving final grades every semester after. For the final deadline to start the Eligibility Assessment, please refer to the deadlines posted on Canvas in the Class of 2028 Home Base course.

2. Complete Clinical Internship and Required Academic Coursework

- Students who graduate from the Degree and Experiential Learning Track will have completed the required child life clinical internship and meet the requirements to receive Certification of Eligibility.
- Coursework needs to be entered into the Eligibility Assessment located on the ACLP's [website](#) and transcripts need to be provided to verify completion of the required academic coursework.
- 3. Finalize Eligibility Assessment
- After graduation, students in the Degree and Experiential Learning Track will submit the required documentation of a completed child life clinical internship, provided by their clinical facility, and their final transcript to finalize their Eligibility Assessment.
- 4. Register and Pay for Exam
- After students have passed all components of the Eligibility Assessment, students will receive an email from the CLCC notifying them that they are now eligible to register and pay for the Child Life Certification Exam.

5. Select Exam Date and Testing Location

Effective August 2026

- After registering and paying for the exam, students will receive an email containing information about how to select their testing location and testing window.

6. Take Certification Exam

- It is highly recommended that students prepare to take the Certification Exam.
- The MS in Child Life provides a preparation module on Canvas in the Class of 2028 Home Base course with test prep strategies and resources to help students prepare.
 - This will be available to students during the last semester of the MS in Child Life Program.
- The Child Life Certification Exam will be administered at the selected testing location during the selected testing window.
- Students will receive an email with information concerning policies and procedures regarding what students need to bring to the testing location, what items are prohibited in the testing location, etc.

More information regarding the steps to becoming a Certified Child Life Specialist can be found on the ACLP's [website](#) and in the [Child Life Professional Certification Candidate Manual](#).

Guidelines for Requesting Recommendation Letters

Child Life Graduate Program faculty are willing to write letters of recommendation for child life students and require a few things of students making this request. A minimum of 2 weeks' notice is required to prepare letters of recommendation. Requests made without a minimum of 2 weeks' notice may be denied due to a lack of time to sufficiently fulfill the request

Please provide the following items in one email as your recommendation letter request:

1. A professional email requesting recommendation letters including the specific reason you are needing letters, why you believe this faculty to be equipped to write a quality letter of recommendation for you, and the type of experience you are applying to (volunteer position, practicum, internship, etc.).
2. A PDF attached list of each site applying to and the deadline for each of the recommendation letters
3. A current resume with GPA clearly listed including practicum if completed, volunteer, service work, and work experience, especially highlighting those with children.
 - It is highly recommended that you have someone in Center for Career Development to review your resume before submitting this recommendation letter request.
4. Current student copy of all transcripts from TN Tech and any other colleges or universities attended.
5. List of hospitals on the Letter of Recommendation Form
 - Indicate for each site if the faculty member is to give you the letter to include in your application, email, or USPS mail it directly to the site
 - Organize this form in this manner
 - i. Sites requiring only the ACLP recommendation form
 - ii. Sites requiring only a recommendation letter
 - iii. Sites requiring both the ACLP recommendation form and a letter
6. Any specific forms for EACH site you are applying to if the institution has a specific form to complete.
 - Faculty must receive these forms via email so they can be typed.

7. Provide these materials in one single email. Faculty will not accept multiple emails; only 1 complete email with all of the information you are requesting.

This information will assist the faculty in writing a letter that accurately reflects your current academic standing and extracurricular service involvement.

If after you submit your email request, you need to make any changes or additions, your request will go to the end of the list for processing. This will happen each time you make a change or edit. Recommendation letter requests are processed in the order they are received to be fair to those who were initially professionally prepared.

FYI: Letters of recommendation are about you per your request but are not addressed to you. Thus, they are not intended for your review. Opening a recommendation letter written to someone other than you is considered a violation of professional practice and would deter the faculty from writing further letters for a student.

Suggestions for Obtaining a Child Life Practicum and Internship

Child life practicum/pre-internship opportunities and internships are competitive with many people applying to every opportunity. Students must share their unique knowledge, skills, experiences, talents, passion, abilities, and determination to stand out from the crowd during the review and interview process. Students most successful in obtaining practicum and internships have a thorough understanding of the child life profession and clinical practice, developmental theory, family-centered care, play, and the needs of children and families in healthcare. During applications and interviews, these students can apply their knowledge to their volunteer and work experience both in and out of the healthcare environment. Successful candidates also have excellent communication skills, both written and verbal, and a minimum GPA of 3.0, although a higher GPA is seen as more competitive. Students must also demonstrate a willingness to learn, and the ability to accept and act upon constructive feedback. Both professionalism and a willingness to learn are vital to successfully obtaining a child life practicum or internship.

Students Not Offered Practicum or Internship

Pursuing a child life internship is the goal for students in the MS in Child Life Degree and Experiential Learning Track who wish to sit for the Child Life Certification Exam, however earning a child life internship requires external healthcare agency decision-making, including acceptance into the clinical child life program's internship. These programs are extremely competitive, with larger hospitals receiving 80-100 child life internship applications per semester often accepting only two students. Students who do not receive an offer for a child life practicum or child life internship will be able to apply for an experience in the next semester. Students are encouraged to meet with the Program Clinical Coordinator and/or the Program Director to discuss next steps on their academic path.

Common Questions – Practicum and Internship

Are students accepted into the Degree and Experiential Learning Track required to complete a child life practicum and internship?

- Yes, to graduate from the Degree and Experiential Learning Track, students must complete a child life practicum and internship. Students who are accepted into the MS in Child Life Degree Only Track are not required to complete a child life practicum or child life internship to graduate.

What happens if a student does not pass a child life practicum/pre-internship experience or internship?

- A student who receives a child life practicum or child life internship but does not pass will meet with the Program Director and Program Clinical Coordinator to evaluate next steps in the MS in Child Life Degree and Experiential Learning Track.

What happens if an affiliation agreement is required by the hospital, but fails to be legally negotiated after a student is accepted to a child life practicum or child life internship?

- While a student may successfully earn an experiential learning opportunity, many hospitals and outside facilities require a contract between the university and that facility.
- Despite the student's professional due diligence, occasionally a contract cannot be successfully negotiated between the hospital and university legal counsels.
- Students in this situation may:
 - Decide to apply for another hospital's practicum/pre-internship experience or internship. This may add time to the student's graduation plan.
 - A student who receives a child life practicum or child life internship, but an affiliation agreement fails to be legally negotiated will meet with the Program Director and/or the Program Clinical Coordinator to discuss next steps in the MS in Child Life Degree and Experiential Learning Track.

Appendix A

Child Life Competencies Curriculum Map

I. Care of Infants, Children, Youth, and Families	
Competency A: The ability to assess the developmental and psychosocial needs of infants, children, youth, and families.	
Knowledge Sub-Competency	Assignment
a. Articulate theories of human growth and development, play, and family systems.	HEC 5510: case studies assignment, developmental needs assessments HEC 6510: play theories annotated bibliography, evidence-based play literature review and practice statement HEC 6520: theoretical family framework discovery document HEC 6535: literature review synthesis paper
b. Describe formal and informal techniques to assess developmental and emotional state.	HEC 6500: child life scope of practice paper
c. Identify relevant data used to develop a comprehensive child life assessment.	HEC 6500: child life assessment model
d. Identify factors that impact a child and family's vulnerability to stress and trauma.	HEC 6525: trauma informed approaches activity
e. Identify how children and families interpret and make meaning of health, illness, and loss.	HEC 6500: stress potential and prioritization plan HEC 6530: death awareness assignment, developmental perspectives and loss psychosocial plan
f. Recognize families as they define themselves, identifying strengths and challenges in family dynamics and community supports.	HEC 6520: therapeutic environments presentation
g. Describe the cyclical process of assessment, play, intervention, and evaluation of child life services.	HEC 6500: child life assessment model and documentation assignment
Competency B. The ability to initiate and maintain meaningful and therapeutic relationships with infants, children, youth, and families	
Knowledge Sub-Competency	Assignment

a. Articulate the tenets of patient and family-centered care.	HEC 5500: evidence-based practice paper
b. Describe the essential elements of the therapeutic relationship.	HEC 5500: scope of practice reading, reflective discussion post
c. Identify effective communication skills to support a child and family.	HEC 5500: assessment of communication skills assignment
d. Identify values related to sociocultural diversity.	HEC 5100: cross-cultural awareness in healthcare assignment
e. Recognize educational opportunities and resources that are responsible to the needs of the child and family in order to promote learning and mastery.	HEC 6540: evidence-based interventions paper
Competency C. The ability to provide opportunities for play for infants, children, youth, and families.	
Knowledge Sub-Competency	Assignment
a. Articulate the definitions and functions of play.	A. 6510: play theories annotated bibliography, evidenced based play literature review and practice statement
b. Identify the developmental and social milestones of play.	HEC 6510: play theories annotated bibliography, evidence-based play literature review and practice statement
c. Identify therapeutic approaches that facilitate open-ended, developmentally supportive play and expressive arts.	HEC 6510: evidence-based play supplies resource, play plans
d. Understand common play themes relevant to life events and healthcare experiences.	HEC 6510: evidence-based play supplies resource, play plan
e. Identify toys and materials that encourage open-ended and expressive play, as well as close-ended play, and the value and purpose of each.	HEC 6510: evidence-based play supplies resource, play environment creation and evaluation assignment
f. Establish safe and engaging play spaces that promote cross-cultural connections, facilitate group play, and encourage children to choose and explore at their own pace.	HEC 5100: case study assignment HEC 6540: intervention assignments
g. Model and teach child-directed play skills to build capacity in others, such as volunteers, medical staff, and family caregivers.	HEC 6510: play theories annotated bibliography, evidence-based play literature review and practice statement

Competency D. The ability to provide a safe, therapeutic, and healing environment for infants, children, youth, and families.

Knowledge Sub-Competency	Assignment
a. Explain the impact of environmental design on human behavior.	A. 6540: evidence-based interventions paper
b. Identify emotional safety hazards and corresponding preventative and protective measures to include education on mandated reporting.	HEC 6540: evidence-based interventions paper
c. Identify environmental safety hazards and corresponding preventative and protective measures.	HEC 6540: evidence-based interventions paper
d. Recognize public health guidelines for technology in early childhood and identify digital content that facilitates coping.	HEC 6510: play environment creation and evaluation assignment
e. Identify knowledge of privacy and confidentiality policies.	HEC 6520: self-reflective practices essay, synthesis paper, policy brief

Competency E. The ability to support infants, children, youth, and families in coping with stressful events.

Knowledge Sub-Competency	Assignment
a. Identify types of stressful events affecting children and families, including medical procedures, pain, traumatic life events, loss, end of life, and grief work.	HEC 6500: stress potential assessment and prioritization plan HEC 6525: types of trauma video chat HEC 6530: death awareness assignment
b. Identify factors that may impact vulnerability to stress.	HEC 6525: trauma informed approaches activity
c. Describe immediate and long-term coping styles and techniques, as well as their effect on adjustment and behavior.	HEC 6525: coping styles and techniques activity
d. Describe sensory, cognitive, and behavioral coping strategies specific to developmental stages and populations.	HEC 6500: stress potential assessment and prioritization plan
e. Articulate effective non-pharmacological pain management techniques.	HEC 6540: intervention assignments
f. Identify principles of effective advocacy in partnership with families and other team members.	HEC 6540: evidence-based interventions paper

g. Understand the role of communication, particularly active listening and empathetic responding, in building relationships with families undergoing stress.	HEC 6520: self-reflective practice essay
h. Understand the role of self-reflection in aiding patients and families in the process of mourning.	HEC 6530: theoretical applications paper
i. Identify various stages or models of grief surrounding the dying process.	HEC 6530: death resource list and review video
Competency F. The ability to provide teaching, specific to the population served, including psychological preparation for potentially stressful experiences, with infants, children, youth, and families.	
Knowledge Sub-Competency	Assignment
a. Identify basic terminology, processes, and expected plan of care for the population served.	A. 6540: intervention assignments
b. Articulate learning styles and needs of individuals with various developmental levels, emotional states, and of diverse backgrounds and experiences.	HEC 5100: case study assignment HEC 5510: case studies, developmental needs assessment discussions HEC 6535: literature review synthesis paper, developmental needs assessment, evidence-based practices assignment
c. Identify teaching techniques for use with individuals of diverse developmental levels and learning needs.	HEC 6540: intervention assignments
d. Describe common fears, misconceptions and concerns of individuals in each developmental stage.	HEC 6500: developmental case studies
e. Describe how children construct knowledge of their healthcare experience through interaction with other children, adults, and materials.	HEC 6500: developmental case studies
f. Articulate fundamentals of psychological preparation found in child life literature.	HEC 6540: psychological preparation assignment

II. Professional Responsibility

Competency A. The ability to practice within the scope of professional and personal knowledge and skill base.

Knowledge Sub-Competency	Assignment
--------------------------	------------

a. Demonstrate an understanding of the scope of practice as defined by the appropriate state jurisdiction or regulatory organization.	HEC 6550: professional development portfolio and presentation
b. Demonstrate an understanding of the interconnections between scope of practice and practice setting.	HEC 6500: child life scope of practice paper
c. Take action to ensure personal responsibilities and professional competencies are maintained and do not fall below a level considered acceptable in the field of practice.	HEC 6550: professional development portfolio and presentation
d. Manage overlaps in scope of practice with other professions.	HEC 6550: professional development portfolio and presentation
Competency B. The ability to continuously engage in self-reflective professional child life practice.	
Knowledge Sub-Competency	Assignment
a. Recognize and describe how personal challenges and learning needs in knowledge and practice skills may impact service delivery.	HEC 6550: professional resiliency assessment reflection and resources
b. Identify resources and opportunities for professional development.	HEC 6550: professional resiliency assessment and reflection resources
c. Articulate reasons for and impact of under-involvement and over-involvement of professionals with children and families.	HEC 6540: intervention assignments
d. Articulate the impact of one's own culture, values, beliefs, and behaviors on interactions with diverse populations.	HEC 5100: cross-cultural awareness assessment and self-reflective child life practice assignment
Competency C. The ability to function as a member of the service team.	
Knowledge Sub-Competency	Assignment
a. Describe services and resources of other professionals and identify their roles and functions.	HEC6520: synthesis paper, policy brief
b. Identify the unique contribution of the family and professionals in the provision of care.	HEC 6520: synthesis paper, policy brief
c. Articulate the organizational structure and function of the interdisciplinary team.	HEC 6520: synthesis paper, policy brief

d. Describe the impact of communication styles on groups and individuals.	HEC 6520: self-reflective practice essay
e. Identify the importance of advocacy in collaboration with the medical team.	HEC 6540: evidence-based intervention paper
f. Recognize the integral role of patient and family within the interdisciplinary team.	HEC 6520: synthesis paper, policy brief

III. Education and Supervision

Competency A. The ability to represent and communicate child life practice and psychosocial issues of infants, children, youth, and families to others.

Knowledge Sub-Competency	Assignment
a. Describe and integrate the basic concepts of public speaking and teaching methods appropriate to subject matter and audience.	HEC 6550: professional presentation on child life
b. Identify classic and current literature on issues related to child life services in a manner meaningful to the audience.	HEC 6550: professional presentation on child life, ethics case study
c. Articulate the process for engaging in evidence-based practice.	HEC 6550: professional presentation on child life
d. Identify and articulate a definition of advocacy.	HEC 5100: advocacy paper HEC 6540: evidence-based intervention paper

Competency B. The ability to supervise child life students and volunteers.

Knowledge Sub-Competency	Assignment
a. Discuss supervisory styles and their impact on others.	HEC 6550: program administration and evaluation benchmarking report
b. Identify skills and knowledge necessary for others to complete assignments and tasks.	HEC 6550: program administration and evaluation benchmarking report
c. Articulate students and volunteer program goals and expectations in the context of providing child life services.	HEC 6550: program administration and evaluation benchmarking report

d. Identify adult learning needs.	HEC 6550: program administration and evaluation benchmarking report HEC 6535: literature review synthesis paper, developmental needs assessment, interview and case study, evidence-based practices assignment, adult psychosocial services training
-----------------------------------	--

IV. Research Fundamentals	
A. The ability to integrate clinical evidence and fundamental child life knowledge into professional decision-making.	
Knowledge Sub-Competency	Assignment
a. Describe research methodologies that are relevant to the child life field (qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods, evidence-based practice, and quality improvement).	HEC 6515: literature review and synthesis paper, research proposal paper, research proposal presentation
b. Articulate the role and purpose of research design.	HEC 6515: literature review and synthesis paper, research proposal paper, research proposal presentation
c. Adhere to ethical guidelines regarding research participation selection, including vulnerable populations, informed consent and assent, and maintaining confidentiality.	HEC 6515: research proposal paper, research proposal presentation

V. Administration	
A. The ability to develop and evaluate child life services.	
Knowledge Sub-Competency	Assignment
a. Identify program components that require assessment.	HEC 6550: program administration and evaluation benchmarking report
b. Identify meaningful data for effective evaluation of child life services.	HEC 6550: program administration and evaluation benchmarking report

c. Describe resources to assist in evaluation and development of services.	HEC 6550: program administration and evaluation benchmarking report
Competency B. The ability to implement child life services within the structure and culture of the work environment.	
Knowledge Sub-Competency	Assignment
a. Identify organizational structure and relevant policies and procedures.	HEC 6550: program administration and evaluation benchmarking report
b. Articulate the mission and goals of the work environment.	HEC 6550: program administration and evaluation benchmarking report
c. Identify methods for obtaining needed resources.	HEC 6550: program administration and evaluation benchmarking report
d. Identify information necessary for effectively managing resources.	HEC 6550: program administration and evaluation benchmarking report

Appendix B

MS in Child Life Program of Study

Program of Study			
Master of Science in Child Life			
MS Degree Only		MS Degree + Experiential Learning	
Fall 1 Courses	Credit Hours	Fall 1 Courses	Credit Hours
HEC 5500	3	HEC 5500	3
HEC 5510	3	HEC 5510	3
HEC 5100	3	HEC 5100	3
			9
Spring 1 Courses		Spring 1 Courses	
HEC 6500	3	HEC 6500	3
HEC 6510	3	HEC 6510	3
HEC 6520	3	HEC 6520	3
			9
Summer Courses		Summer 1	
HEC 6540	3	HEC 6540	3
HEC 6535	3	HEC 6570 (Exp. Learning min 100 hours maximum 180 hours)	3
HEC 6550	3		6
Fall 2 Courses		Fall 2 Courses	
HEC 6515	3	HEC 6515	3
HEC 6525	3	HEC 6525	3
HEC 6530	3	HEC 6530	3
			9
		Spring 2 Courses	
		HEC 6575 - Child Life Clinical Experience (minimum 600 hours)	6
		HEC 6565 – Child Life Clinical Seminar	3
			9
		Summer 2	
		HEC 6550	3
		HEC 6535	3
			6
Total	36	Total	48
Experiential Learning Track: 12 credit hours			
Notes: Experiential learning credit hours are available for students choosing to pursue a child life practicum or pre-internship experience and/or clinical internship requiring university affiliation. The child life program director or clinical coordinator must approve organizations offering experiential learning.			

Appendix C

Tentative Timeline of Experiential Learning Documentation

Fall 2026 Semester Final Deadlines (Practicum)

September 13, 2026:

1. A list of practicum programs to which the student wishes to apply
2. A copy of your driver's license

October 11, 2026:

1. Completed first drafts of all applications for each practicum program
2. Proof of vaccination documentation
3. Physical examination form
4. CPR Certification documentation (must have an in-person skills component)
 - * If a student already holds an active CPR certification that will not expire before August 2027, this documentation can be submitted

November 15, 2026:

1. Background check completed
2. Drug screening completed
3. Proof of health insurance
4. Final drafts of all applications for each practicum program

November 29, 2026

1. Child Life Course Verification Form submitted to Dr. Sisk

December 20, 2026

1. Unofficial transcripts
2. Completed Child Life Course Verification Form

Spring 2027 Semester Deadlines (Internship)

February 7, 2027:

1. A list of internship programs to which the student wishes to apply
2. [ACLP Eligibility Assessment](#) must be started

March 14, 2027:

1. Completed first draft of [ACLP Common Application](#)
2. CPR Certification documentation (must have an in-person skills component)
 - * If a student already holds an active CPR certification that will not expire before June 2028, this documentation can be submitted

April 18, 2027:

1. Proof of vaccination documentation

Effective August 2026

2. Final draft of ACLP Common Application

May 24, 2027:

1. Unofficial transcripts
2. Updated ACLP Eligibility Assessment
 - a. Updated Eligibility Assessment should reflect completed Spring 2027 classes and in-progress classes for both Summer 2027 and Fall 2027 semesters.