

Master of Science in in Child Life

Information Guide

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*(revised 12/5/17 to reflect approval of Master of Science in
Child Life degree)*



**College of Family and
Consumer Sciences**

Human Development & Family Science

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

The University of Georgia

Department of Human Development and Family Science

Note: All content in this information guide is subject to change. Students in the Master of Science in Child Life Program also need to obtain a copy of the Handbook for Graduate Students that corresponds to the year they enter the Master's program. The graduate handbook is the official departmental manual that guides students' graduate studies.

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Welcome to Child Life at UGA

The Department of Human Development and Family Science at the University of Georgia prides itself on providing students with various academic and career options. The aim of this department is to maximize the strengths of each individual student and support his/her area of study and research. In order to meet the individualized needs and interests of students, the department offers three graduate degrees: (1) a Master of Science degree in Child Life; (2) a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Human Development and Family Science; and (3) a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Human Development and Family Science with an emphasis in Marriage and Family Therapy.

Master of Science Program in Child Life

The M. S. program in Child Life is designed for students to pursue a graduate degree in preparation for working with children and families in healthcare settings. This program allows a dual focus on the study of issues and development in children and families, along with theory, practice, and research in Child Life. Students in this program will complete the required Human Development and Family Science and Child Life coursework listed in their program of study (see Appendix A). Upon fulfillment of the program requirements, students will graduate with a Master of Science degree in Child Life.

Benefit of a Department of Human Development and Family Science

There are many benefits to pursuing the study of Child Life within a Department of Human Development and Family Science. Students in this program learn about and apply research skills to their areas of interest, preparing them to work in both the field of Child Life and Human Development and Family Science.

Study in Human Development and Family Science and Child Life

A Master of Science degree in Human Development and Family Science will be beneficial for students pursuing a career in the field of Child Life by providing an education on developmental issues and important topics concerning both children and families. Additionally, students in this program will receive education on Child Life theory, practice, and application within the field. After meeting the program of study requirements, students

will complete an in-depth internship under a Certified Child Life Specialist. The program in Child Life at the University of Georgia works in congruence with the Association of Child Life Professionals requirements for becoming a Certified Child Life Specialist. Upon completion of both the educational requirements and internship, students will graduate and be eligible to sit for the Child Life certification exam.

Research

The Department of Human Development and Family Science believes that research is an integral part of all graduate students' training. Various research and analytical skills are taught and refined throughout the students' studies, which include research presentations and completion of a thesis or a clinical project. These analytical skills will help students solve real-world problems and understand how to read and interpret research, as well as conduct research to contribute to the Child Life field. See the Graduate Program Handbook for more information on the research focus of this department.

Theses and Clinical Projects

All students in the Master of Science degree in Child Life program will complete a Master's thesis or a clinical project. Students are required to select a committee of three faculty members, including a Major Professor who will provide supervision throughout the process.

Master's Thesis

A thesis requires students to apply research and critical thinking skills to a research question of interest within their field. Students who select the thesis option must propose their thesis to their committee members, complete the research project and write a thesis manuscript, and pass a defense with their committee members in order to be eligible to graduate. Please see the Graduate Program Handbook for detailed information about the thesis.

Clinical Project

A clinical project is an applied project to address an identified community need in collaboration with an organization. The clinical project requires a literature review, a written proposal, completion of a project that will be useful in the Human Development and Family Science field, and a written report. This is a rigorous, research-based project, completed in collaboration with a hospital, child life specialist, or other community partner under the direction of the student's major professor and committee. The clinical project applies a review of substantive literature and relevant theory to a problem of an applied nature in a clinical setting. The process for a clinical project closely follows that of a thesis. Students pick a topic for the project in collaboration with a community partner, complete a comprehensive literature review, propose the project to the committee, complete the project and a written report, and defend the project and report. The student's committee will evaluate the project based on its comprehensiveness, completeness, and appropriateness in relation to professional work in the student's area of interest. See Appendix B for a list of steps to complete a clinical project.

Graduate Portfolio

A Graduate portfolio is required for all students completing a Master's Degree in Child Life. Detailed information about graduate portfolio requirements is available in the Graduate Handbook.

Child Life Practicum

Students will gain knowledge in the field of Child Life by completing practicum experiences at a pediatric hospital. Each student will complete a practicum during one semester of their graduate coursework. Practicum experiences will include traveling to the hospital at least once weekly to shadow Child Life Specialists. The goal of practicum is to enable students to gain appropriate experiences to prepare them to obtain and complete a Child Life internship.

During the practicum, students will gain approximately 120 hours of experience in a clinical setting. Students will have practicum experience in multiple units of the pediatric hospital in order to experience a variety of Child Life interventions. Students will also

complete assignments to be turned in to their on-site practicum supervisor. During the practicum, students will have the opportunity to observe clinical skills important for Child Life, such as assessing patient needs, evaluating coping, and developing interventions to support children and families in the healthcare setting. Students who have completed a child life practicum prior to admission will have the option to complete an additional practicum during their graduate program, in consultation with the Child Life Director and Child Life Coordinator. See the Previous Practica section for more information.

When to Complete the Practicum

Students complete a practicum at different times in their graduate work, depending on the availability of practicum sites, coursework schedules, and assistantship responsibilities. Many students complete a practicum during fall of their second year, but this is not the only option. A practicum usually requires the student to be available 2 or 3 full days per week. Students register for HDFS 7210: Problems in Human Development and Family Science as one of their regular courses during the semester of their practicum.

Practicum Application Process

Each hospital has different application requirements for practica. It is the responsibility of students to apply to practicum programs by the application deadline. Many students complete practica in hospitals near Athens (including Atlanta and Macon), but completing a practicum at another location during the summer between a student's first and second years is also an option. UGA does not specifically arrange practica for Child Life students, and students are not limited to any particular hospital or program. The Child Life Director and Child Life Coordinator will work closely with each student to help find the practicum placement that best meets his/her needs.

Previous Practica

Some students may have completed a Child Life practicum prior to their studies at the University of Georgia. Although a previous practicum is not required for admission into the graduate program, it is beneficial. Students who have already completed a Child Life

practicum are encouraged, but not required, to complete a second practicum during their graduate study.

Child Life Internship

A Child Life internship is a required part of the program. An internship allows students to work intensively with Certified Child Life Specialists in healthcare settings and to participate in preparation, developmental assessments, support groups, procedural support, normalization activities, bereavement activities, and documentation. Students also work directly with patients and learn how theory is applied to their work. The internship experience provides students with extensive hands-on clinical training, as well as the ability to develop professionalism and knowledge of Child Life practice. Students will maintain regular contact with the Child Life Director at the University of Georgia and complete various assignments while participating in a hospital internship.

UGA does not arrange internships for Child Life students, and students are not limited to any particular hospital or program. Students will apply and interview with multiple hospitals in order to secure an internship position.

When to Intern

Students will be eligible to participate in a Child Life internship upon completion of their program of study requirements. Most students become interns during the summer of their second year, but fall and spring internships are also available. An internship is a full-time commitment; students cannot complete coursework or assistantship responsibilities while on internship. Keep in mind that students will still enroll and register for internship hours at the University of Georgia during their internship.

Internship Application Process

Before entering a Child Life internship program, students will need to find and apply to programs, interview with hospital staff, and be extended a formal offer into the internship program. It is important to work with the Child Life Director and Child Life Coordinator at all stages of the internship application process. Students are responsible for researching various Child Life internship programs in order to determine which programs and hospitals best suit their needs and interests. The Child Life Director and Child Life

Coordinator will provide input on each student's list of possible hospitals, and will alert students if they have identified a hospital where UGA cannot complete a MOU.

In order to apply, students complete and submit the common Child Life internship application (available online at <http://bit.ly/CommonChildLifeApp>), along with any supplemental application materials individual hospitals require. Once the completed application has been received, hospital staff will screen applicants and contact some students for interviews. Interviews typically take place on the hospital campus, although a few hospitals offer interviews via Skype and other technologies. After the interview process is complete, hospital staff extend offers to selected applicants on a standard offer date. Students have the option to accept or decline each hospital that has offered them an internship position.

As soon as the student has accepted an internship offer from a hospital program, the student will work with HDFS department staff to complete a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the hospital unless UGA has a pre-existing MOU with that hospital. A Memorandum of Understanding is a legal agreement between the University of Georgia and the hospital where the internship will take place concerning the student's role and educational goals throughout the internship. This legal document must be completed and signed by both UGA and the hospital prior to starting an internship. The process can be time consuming and arduous, and students should work with the designated department support staff to begin the process as soon as they accept an internship placement. ***The MOU must be signed and executed prior to starting the internship.*** You will also be required to have up-to-date immunizations and complete a background check prior to beginning your internship.

Previous Internships

Some students may have completed a Child Life internship prior to their studies at the University of Georgia. Although a previous practicum or internship is not required for admission into the graduate program, it is beneficial. Students who have already completed a Child Life internship prior to admission to the graduate program will not be required to complete a second internship. Instead, they will take additional coursework that fits with

their academic and career goals. This additional coursework will be selected in consultation with the student's major professor.

Graduate Assistantships

Paid graduate assistantship positions in the Department of Human Development and Family Science are available but are limited in number. Applicants to the department will be considered for assistantships during the admissions process, and students will be notified if they have been awarded an assistantship position. Students who obtain an assistantship position receive a monthly stipend and will have their tuition waived; however, students with an assistantship are still responsible for paying student fees each semester. See the Graduate Program Handbook for further information on graduate assistantships.

Volunteer Work

Child Life graduate students balance coursework and applied practicum experiences during their fall and spring semesters. In addition, volunteer work is an excellent way to gain experience with children of different ages and abilities, to learn more about Child Life or Human Development and Family Science, and to be eligible for child life internships. Students in the Child Life program are encouraged to participate in volunteer work throughout their graduate studies whenever possible, especially during the summer of their first year. There are many local opportunities for volunteer work that allow students to apply their knowledge and develop applied skills in Human Development and Family Science. Possible volunteer options include the Child Life Volunteer program at Piedmont Athens Regional Medical Center, Child Life programs at other hospitals near Athens (and in other locations during the summer), child care programs at the Child Development Lab at the McPhaul Center, and summer camps for children with chronic illnesses such as Camp Twin Lakes in Rutledge, GA, Camp Will-A-Way in Winder, GA, and Extra Special People in Athens, GA.

Professional Development

There is a wide range of opportunities available to promote professional development while studying at the University of Georgia. Students are strongly encouraged

to seek out and participate in various activities and organizations as a means of professional development. The following are examples of professional development opportunities that students have previously participated in during their graduate studies.

Membership in the Association of Child Life Professionals (ACLP) and Other Professional Organizations

Students in the Master of Science in Child Life program are required to join the Association of Child Life Professionals (ACLP), which is the professional organization in the field of Child Life. Students are expected to join this organization as soon as they begin their studies, and are expected to continue membership throughout the duration of their Master's program. Students pay an annual membership fee to join the ACLP. Members receive a monthly newsletter concerning Child Life topics, have access to important literature online, and are eligible for reduced ACLP conference rates. Members are also able to read and participate in the online Child Life forum, which allows students to gain valuable information on issues and topics in Child Life, communicate with professionals in the field, and view current job openings. This membership also fulfills a Master's portfolio requirement. See <http://bit.ly/CLmembership> for membership categories and benefits.

Aside from the Association of Child Life Professionals, there are also other Human Development and Family Science related organizations that students may join. These include, but are not limited to, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR), the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD), and the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS).

Conferences

Opportunities to develop professionalism in the field of Child Life vary from two-day seminar trainings at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta (CHOA) to professional conferences held throughout the United States. Many Child Life students choose to attend the annual Child Life Conference hosted by the Association of Child Life Professionals (ACLP). Participation at these professional conferences offers students unique opportunities to expand their

knowledge in the theory and practice of Child Life as well as network with professionals currently in the field.

In addition to conferences and professional development events in Child Life, there are many conferences on Human Development and Family Science and Child Life held both locally and nationally. Previous students have attended conferences hosted by the Association of Child Life Professionals (ACLP), the Georgia Association for the Education of Young Children (GAEYC), the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR). Conference and seminar attendance is not mandatory; however, these events can be important to a graduate student's professional development.

Presentations

Students are encouraged to deliver guest lectures and lead discussions on Child Life or other Human Development and Family Science topics. Previously students have presented at the GAEYC conference. Participating in presentations, trainings, and conferences allows students to share knowledge, practice presentation style, and develop leadership skills.

Graduates of the Child Life Program

Graduates of the Child Life program have obtained positions within various hospitals, pediatric hospice settings, and other child or family support organizations. The vast majority of Child Life graduates obtain jobs as Child Life Specialists in healthcare settings such as Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children, M.D. Anderson, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, and many others. Other positions our graduates have held include community-physician liaison, national outreach coordinator for local hospitals, extension agent, program coordinator of Children's Miracle Network, hospice specialist, and director of marketing and public relations at the Georgia Transplant Foundation. By pursuing a degree in Child Life within a Human Development and Family Science department, students are able to study diverse issues on children and families, while maximizing their career potential.

**Appendix A: Sample Program of Study for Master of Science in Child Life
(Thesis and Non-Thesis Options)**

YEAR 1		
Fall	Spring	Summer
HDFS 6630 Theories of Family Relationships	HDFS 6640 Issues in Family Relationships	HDFS 7010 Directed Study in Human Development and Family Science (Medical Terminology)
HDFS 6900 Seminar in Human Development and Family Science (Graduate Statistics 1)	HDFS 6800 Research Methods	
HDFS 6810 Hospitalized Child and the Family	HDFS 6820 Child Life Interventions for Children and Families in Health Care Settings	
HDFS 6100 Theories in Human Development	HDFS 7130 Therapeutic Benefits of Play	
HDFS 8910 Current Research and Issues in Human Development and Family Science		
YEAR 2		
Fall	Spring	Summer
HDFS 7210 Problems in Human Development and Family Science (Hospital Practicum)	HDFS 7010: Directed Study in Human Development and Family Science (non-thesis clinical project) OR HDFS 7300 Master's Thesis	HDFS 7910 Internship in Human Development and Family Science
HDFS 6830 Death, Dying, and Bereavement Across the Lifespan	HDFS 8040 Family Psychopathology and Assessment Throughout the Lifespan	
Elective	HDFS 6130 Family Policy	
HDFS 8910 Current Research and Issues in Human Development and Family Science	HDFS 6860 Parent Education and Child Guidance	

*Curriculum may need to be altered depending on student's background; electives may be chosen by student in consultation with Major Professor to ensure a well-rounded background in child development and child life issues

***Other possible electives:

HDFS 8720 Ecological Perspective on Individual and Family Diversity

IHDD 6000 Disability Issues

IHDD 7010 Directed Study in Disability

SOWK 7120 Child Abuse & Neglect

Appendix B: Steps to Complete a Clinical Project

A clinical project is an applied project to address an identified community need, in collaboration with a hospital or other organization.

The following are the basic steps to complete a clinical project. Students who choose a clinical project are strongly encouraged to identify a Major Professor early in the spring of your first year of study, and to discuss options for the project with the Major Professor as early as possible. Keep in mind that a clinical project is a rigorous, research-based effort to create an in-depth project that will have practical application in the Human Development and Family Science field.

1. Choose a collaborating organization, and identify a contact at that organization.

Collaborating organizations could be a hospital, a group of Child Life Specialists with interest in a particular topic, a camp serving children with health care needs, or a community-based organization that serves children with physical and/or mental health needs.

2. Identify a Major Professor and advisory committee. Discuss clinical project ideas with your Major Professor, the Child Life Director, and/or the Child Life Coordinator as early in your program of study as possible. When you have selected your Major Professor and advisory committee members, and they have agreed to serve, get the appropriate signatures on the departmental form.

3. Meet with your organization contact (in person if possible) and discuss needs of the organization that you could help meet. You could develop a set of therapeutic activities, a guide for parents and/or patients to meet a specific need, or any other in-depth resource that helps further the mission of the organization.

4. Choose a specific topic. Discuss the topic with your Major Professor and organization contact to ensure that it is appropriate for a clinical project and that it meets the community's needs. This is also an appropriate time to discuss any specifications the organization has (e.g., specific colors or formats), and to identify people related to the organization who could review the project and provide feedback.

5. Review the research literature related to your topic. This includes identifying a theoretical model that you will use to guide your work, as well as specific literature about the topic that is relevant to your work.

6. **Write a clinical project proposal.** Your Major Professor will guide you in this process. Your proposal should include the following sections:
 - a. Introduction
 - b. Literature Review (including theory)
 - c. Method
 - i. Description of collaborating organization
 - ii. Description of proposed project (with specific outline if possible)
 - iii. Proposed method of collecting reviews from collaborating organization
7. **Hold a proposal meeting** with your committee to formally propose your project. Your proposal meeting should be scheduled with your advisory committee members as early as possible. Your committee should receive a copy of your proposal about two weeks in advance of the meeting. During the proposal, you will use slides to summarize your literature review and proposed project. Committee members will ask questions and make recommendations related to your proposal.
8. **Develop your clinical project** in collaboration with the organization.
9. **Conduct a readability analysis** to determine whether the reading level of your project is appropriate for the audience. Make edits if needed to achieve an appropriate reading level. Readability analyses can be conducted using Microsoft Word and/or online tools.
10. **Collect reviews of the clinical project** from your collaborating organization, based on the review plan you included in your proposal. Review the comments and make revisions as needed to address reviewers' issues.
11. **Complete a final clinical project report.** This should be an expanded version of your proposal, including literature review, a description of the collaborating organization and project, a summary of reviews you received and modifications made to address the reviews, a summary of your readability analyses, a description of how the completed project will be shared with the collaborating organization, and information about how the organization will use and distribute the completed clinical project.
12. **Schedule a final defense of your clinical project** with your committee members. Complete the Request for Announcement of Thesis/Clinical Project Defense form and return it to the department contact so your defense can be announced at least 2 weeks in advance. Your

committee should receive a copy of your paper and completed clinical project about two weeks in advance of the meeting.

13. **Hold your final defense.** Bring copies of the Departmental M.S. Non-Thesis Clinical Project Presentation and Exam Form to your defense. Your committee will sign that form upon successful completion of your defense.

Note: These steps refer only to the clinical project itself. It is the responsibility of the student, in consultation with the Major Professor, to ensure that all required steps are completed prior to Graduate School deadlines. Other steps to consider include committee approval of the Program of Study, completion and committee approval of the Master's Portfolio, and application for graduation.

Appendix C: Graduate Study Forms

1. Department declaration of Major Professor and Advisory Committee (HDFS Department form)
http://www.fcs.uga.edu/docs/Department_Declaration_of_Major_Professor_and_Advisory_Committee_Department_of_Human_Development_and_Family_Science_mc_edits.pdf
2. Advisory Committee for Master of Arts and Master of Science Candidates (Graduate School form)
http://grad.uga.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/body_advcomms.pdf
3. Program of Study form (Graduate School form)
http://grad.uga.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/body_prgmams.pdf
4. Change of Degree Objective (Graduate School form)
http://grad.uga.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/body_reqchgdegobj.pdf
5. Master's Portfolio Checklist (HDFS Department form)
http://www.fcs.uga.edu/docs/Masters_Student_Portfolio_Checklist.pdf
6. Master's Portfolio Approval by Advisory Committee (HDFS Department form)
http://www.fcs.uga.edu/docs/MS_Portfolio_Approval.pdf
7. Request for Announcement of Thesis/Clinical Project Defense (HDFS Department form)
http://www.fcs.uga.edu/docs/Thesis_Announcement_new.pdf
8. Instructions for Applying for Graduation (Graduate School list)
<http://grad.uga.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/appforgradinstructions.pdf>
9. Graduate School M.S. Thesis and Final Oral Examination Approval Form
http://grad.uga.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/body_apprform.pdf
10. Departmental M.S. Non-Thesis Clinical Project Presentation and Exam Form (HDFS Department form)
http://www.fcs.uga.edu/docs/Non-thesis_Approval_new.pdf
11. HDFS 7010 Directed Study Agreement: Special Problems in Human Development and Family Science (to be completed for clinical project course credit)
<http://www.fcs.uga.edu/hdfs/hdfs-7010-agreement>