

Child Life Specialist

Being ill and requiring medical treatment can be stressful and difficult for an adult. It can be even more difficult for a child. Young children need to have their illness and related procedures explained to them in a way they can understand to help them cope.



According to the Child Life Council, Child Life Specialists are trained professionals who work in health care settings to help children “cope with the stress and uncertainty of illness, injury, disability, and hospitalization.”

Child Life Specialists focus on the psychosocial and developmental needs of children, collaborating with families and other health care providers to:

- Prepare children for medical procedures or treatment using language that children understand
- Introduce coping strategies to help reduce anxiety and enhance cooperation with the health care team
- Provide support and distraction during medical procedures
- Offer opportunities for play and expressive activities, to encourage normal development and a sense of fun in spite of challenging circumstances
- Promote family-centered care by providing information, advocacy and support to families of pediatric patients

Information provided by Community of Christ Health Ministries Association
and Dr. Catherine Madden Zahniser, Children's Mercy Hospital
www.hmacofchrist.org 816-833-1000 X1262

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RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THAT . . .

- Children who are prepared for medical procedures experience less fear and anxiety, and will have better long term adjustment to medical challenges.
- Children in the hospital who engage in therapeutic play with a trained professional exhibit less emotional distress, increased cooperation, and fewer negative physiological responses.
- Child life interventions can increase cooperation and help to reduce procedural and post-procedural pain.
- Providing support for family members enhances psychosocial outcomes for young patients. A parent or caregiver's behavior and anxiety levels are strongly correlated with how a child will respond to hospitalization.

*"For I was sick and you looked after me...
...whatever you did for one of the least of these
brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."
Matthew 25:36, 40*

If you are interested in obtaining child life services for your child and family, ask your physician or a health care administrator if child life services are available. For more information on this topic visit: www.ChildLife.org

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