CLAAC | CHILD LIFE ACADEMIC ACCREDITATION COUNCIL

Official Accreditation Standards for Child Life Academic Programs

Standard 1: Program Requirements

a. Program Structure

The child life academic program offers a formally documented child life degree, concentration, or child life option/track at an accredited university/college.

Documentation of this standard must include:

- A copy of the university/college catalogue or handbook summarizing the program
- A narrative description/visualization of how the program is situated in the department, university/college
- A letter of accreditation or letter of reaffirmation

b. Program Governance

The child life academic program demonstrates alignment with the university/college's stated mission, vision, and values; institutional policies for faculty, staff, and student conduct; and institutional and departmental goals pertaining to belonging and wellbeing.

Documentation of this standard must include:

- Copies of university/college or departmental policies, program or university/college mission statements, handbooks or catalogue entries, and/or a narrative describing alignment
- On-site visit with program faculty and students

Standard 2: Faculty and Support Staff Requirements

a. Full-Time Faculty Member

The child life academic program retains at least one full-time faculty member with a minimum of a master's degree, with a doctoral degree preferred, and maintains current Certified Child Life Specialist (CCLS) credential. This faculty member should be qualified and competent by virtue of their education, experience, and professional credentials to provide academic and clinical education as assigned by the program's leadership. Prerequisite skills and/or qualifications of the full-time faculty member should include, but not be limited to: child life clinical experience, extensive educational background in child life competencies and related topics, higher education experience, teaching and child life curriculum development experience, knowledge of evidence-based and current practices in child life service provision, effective communication skills and leadership experiences, and knowledge and use of student-centered approaches to support, supervision, mentorship, advising, and advocacy.

Documentation of this standard must include:

- A copy of the highest degree earned (e.g., diploma, official transcript)

- A curriculum vitae (CV)
- Proof of current child life certification
- Proof of current full-time faculty appointment
- Proof of compliance with the university/college accrediting body's requirements for faculty education level and qualifications

The full-time faculty member should be in a role that is considered permanent and/or promotable. This faculty member should engage in decisions about curriculum and administration of the program, engage in scholarship and inquiry related to child life, participate in professional development opportunities relevant to the child life profession as well as teaching and learning, and represent child life in the academic discipline through presentations and services.

Documentation of this standard must include:

- Completed Program Faculty Detail Table (see Appendix A)
- A copy of departmental procedures for tenure, promotion, and/or contract renewal
- Proof of status as a full-time faculty member

Documentation of this standard may include:

- A narrative (expanding on the CV if needed) that demonstrates involvement in professional development activities

b. Program Leader

The academic program must have an identifiable, consistent, and stable leader who must maintain a current Certified Child Life Specialist credential and demonstrate professional identity as a CCLS. The program leader may also serve as the program's full-time CCLS faculty member. Prerequisite skills and/or qualification of the program leader should include, but not be limited to: child life clinical experience, extensive educational background in child life competencies and related topics, higher education experience, teaching and child life curriculum development experiences, knowledge of evidence-based and current practices related to child life activities and experiences with different child life settings, effective communication skills and leadership experiences, and knowledge of student-centered approaches to support, supervision, mentorship, advising, and advocacy.

Documentation of this standard must include:

- A copy of the highest degree earned (e.g., diploma, official transcript)
- A curriculum vitae
- Proof of current child life certification
- Proof of current full-time faculty appointment

The program leader must have similar authority to lead and manage the academic program, as those responsible for other comparable academic departments/schools at the university/college. This program leader provides oversight of the program, including coordination of the program, engagement with institutional systems and procedures, and representation of the program in decision making within their institution.

Documentation of this standard must include:

- A completed Program Faculty Detail Table (see Appendix A)
- A formal job description, letter from the department chair, CV demonstrating program leader oversight and involvement
- A narrative description of annual performance evaluations, progress reports, or annual statements of professional responsibility used to evaluate program faculty
- On-site visits with program leader and students

Documentation of this standard may include:

- A narrative (expanding on the CV if needed) that demonstrates program leader involvement in professional development activities

c. Supporting Faculty

The program must demonstrate the presence of additional sufficient and appropriately credentialed faculty to fulfill the program's documented requirements and objectives.

Documentation of this standard must include:

- A completed Program Faculty Detail Table (see Appendix A)
- On-site visits with supporting faculty and students

d. Adjunct Faculty

All adjunct faculty teaching in the child life academic program must possess the appropriate academic qualifications, credentials or licensures, and relevant expertise to fulfill the program's stated requirements and objectives. All adjunct faculty must hold a minimum of a master's degree (a doctoral/terminal degree is preferred).

Documentation of this standard must include:

- A completed Program Faculty Detail Table (see Appendix A)
- Proof of highest degree earned for adjunct faculty member teaching child life competencies (e.g., diploma, official transcript)
- Proof of relevant current licensures or certifications for adjunct faculty members teaching child life competencies
- On-site visits with adjunct faculty and students

e. Support Staff

The program must demonstrate the presence of sufficient support staff to fulfill the program requirements and objectives. These support staff may include program assistants, financial officers, departmental administrative assistants, and other related roles.

Documentation of this standard must include:

- A narrative description of support staff roles and contributions to the operations of the child life academic program
- On-site visits with program support staff and students

Standard 3: Experiential Learning Requirements

a. Experiential Learning Opportunities

The academic program must provide experiential learning opportunities to promote application and translation of child life knowledge, skills, behaviors, research and scholarship. One experiential learning opportunity must involve children within a healthcare setting.

Documentation for this standard must include:

- A completed Experiential Learning Table (see Appendix B)
- Course syllabi
- On-site visits with program faculty and students

b. Experiential Learning Supervision

The child life academic program must ensure that students participating in experiential learning activities receive appropriate academic and clinical supervision from credentialed professionals. Clinical supervisors must meet the supervision standards established by their respective professions. For child life clinical supervisors, this includes meeting all supervision requirements as determined by the Child Life Certification Commission. The child life academic program is responsible for maintaining systems, policies, and resources to support student participation in experiential learning activities, including but not limited to, background checks, drug screenings, immunization records, and verification of prerequisite training.

Documentation for this standard must include:

- Course syllabi
- Proof of written agreements with experiential learning sites (sample agreements are acceptable)
- Proof of accrediting body guidelines (e.g., NAEYC)
- A completed Experiential Learning Table (see Appendix B)
- On-site visits with program faculty and students

c. Child Life Clinical Experience Support

The academic program must support students in acquiring any child life clinical experiences required for certification prior to program graduation. "Child life clinical experiences" are defined specifically as child life practicums and internships. Practicums are pre-internship experiences that allow students the opportunity to observe and/or apply child life competencies under the supervision of an appropriately credentialed CCLS. The program's CCLS faculty members must provide advising and support for students as they approach and participate in child life clinical experiences. This includes advising students on all aspects of the clinical experience application/placement process, connecting them with applicable university/college and community resources (e.g. career services, writing center, counseling center), and assisting with completion of required preparatory and administrative tasks (e.g. affiliation agreement, background check, liability insurance provisions). During the child life clinical experience, the designated child life faculty advisor must be in regular communication with the student and be accessible to the designated clinical site supervisor.

Documentation for this standard must include:

- Course syllabi
- A narrative description of how clinical sites are identified, how students are placed at these sites, and how they are tracked and monitored during their clinical experiences
- A narrative description of how the program communicates with and provides support to students and site supervisors during clinical experiences, supplemented by advising records or documentation, and/or letters of attestation/description from current/former students and/or clinical site supervisors
- Written policies related to student supervision (institutional policies, student handbook, program website, sample affiliation agreements)
- On-site visits with program faculty and students

Standard 4: Resource Requirements

a. Learning Environments

The child life academic program must provide student and faculty access to material, environmental, academic, and community resources that support its mission, goals, and expected outcomes. In addition, the program must take responsibility for informing students of these resources. These include sufficient administrative and instructional space, such as faculty offices, classrooms, and meeting areas, that are safe, accessible, and able to accommodate individuals of all needs and abilities.

Documentation for this standard must include:

- A narrative description of how physical and/or virtual space and facilities needs are met for students and faculty
- Written policies related to usage (student handbooks, orientation guides)
- On-site visits with program faculty and students

b. Supplies and Learning Support

The program must ensure availability of equipment, technology, instructional materials, and other supplies of adequate quality and quantity to support teaching, scholarship, and service for students and faculty.

Documentation for this standard must include:

- A narrative description of how instructional and learning supply needs are met
- Written policies related to supports (institutional policies, student handbooks, orientation guides)
- On-site visits with program faculty and students

c. Campus Resources and Services

Students and faculty must have access to academic and student support services, including but not limited to library services, writing and career centers, disability services, counseling resources, academic advising, financial aid and international student support.

Documentation for this standard must include:

- A narrative description of how resource and service needs are met (and/or how these services are accessible for students engaged in distance education)
- Written policies related to supports (institutional policies, student handbooks, orientation guides)
- On-site visits with program faculty and students

Standard 5: Financial Resource Requirements

The child life academic program must demonstrate that it has the financial resources to accomplish its mission and goals. The program must be financially viable to serve its students and accomplish its goals and student learning outcomes.

Documentation for this standard must include:

- A narrative describing the resources available to the program, as well as a description of the program leader's involvement in budget decision making
- A letter from an institutional administrator, other than the program leader, outlining the program's ongoing access to institutional funding to support the mission of the program and student learning outcomes
- On-site interviews with program faculty, staff, and students

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Standard 6: Curriculum and Competency Requirements

The child life academic program curriculum must reflect the program's mission, vision, values, philosophy, and objectives while also supporting the progressive development of child life knowledge, skills, and behaviors.

Documentation for this standard must include:

- A completed Competency Map (see Appendix C)

Documentation for this standard may also include:

- A program of study showing course sequencing
- Syllabi for courses addressing child life competencies
- Assignment templates, instructions, or exemplars

Standard 7: Student Recruitment and Retention Requirements

a. Recruitment and Admission Policies

Program policies for recruitment, admission, and retention must comply with institutional policies, and/or state and federal laws and regulations. Processes for recruitment and admission must be applied fairly and consistently.

Documentation of this standard must include:

- A copy of institutional policy documents and/or program website information regarding admission practices and standards
- A narrative description of program recruitment and admissions processes

b. Student Performance Monitoring

The program must provide evidence of student performance monitoring. The system for monitoring student performance and meeting program milestones should provide early detection of deficiencies or ethical concerns and provide a process to achieve success.

Documentation of this standard must include:

- A copy of institutional policy documents (student handbook, web page)
- A narrative description of performance monitoring practices, supports, and outcomes

c. Remediation and Retention Policies

The program must provide evidence that policies are in place to address student remediation and retention. Any concerns about a student's progress should be addressed promptly and sufficiently to facilitate successful completion of the program.

Documentation of this standard must include:

- A copy of institutional policy documents and/or program website information regarding remediation and retention

Standard 8: Student Learning Assessment Requirements

The program must document their process and rubric for on-going assessment of student competency attainment. These should identify the assessment methods used and identify in which courses/experiential learning experiences these assessments take place. The program must determine when student learning outcome data will be collected, who will collect it, and how data will be analyzed and used for decision-making.

Documentation of this standard must include:

- Completed Competency Map (Appendix C)
- A narrative description of how data is collected, analyzed, and used for student decision making and support

Standard 9: Program Performance Evaluation Requirements

The program must have procedures for annual program performance evaluation. The plan should evaluate deliverables, including graduation rates, certification examination pass rates, employment rates, and student satisfaction. Programs must have a plan to review results and identify the strengths and areas of improvement to ensure program quality.

Documentation for this standard must include:

- Alumni survey results
- Clinical experience outcomes, graduation rates, certification rates, and employment rates
- A narrative description of how data is analyzed and used for program level decision making (assessment procedures, minutes from faculty meetings)
- A narrative description of how program performance deliverables are made accessible to the public in a timely manner
- On-site visits with program faculty and students/alumni