CLAAC | CHILD LIFE ACADEMIC ACCREDITATION COUNCIL

Academic Competencies for Child Life Professionals

The Child Life Academic Society has established 16 competencies for ensuring academic education and training for entry-level proficient child life professionals. Each competency consists of an observable set of three milestones: ***knowledge***, ***skills***, and ***behaviors,*** which can be taught, measured, and assessed by child life educators and learners. These milestones progress from less to more advanced, beginning with ***knowledge*** as a foundation, moving to ***skills*** as applications, and culminating in ***behaviors*** as consistent, integrative, and often critical practices.

Competency 1 – Child Life History and Frameworks

Knowledge	Skills	Behaviors
Recalls frameworks (e.g., trauma-informed care, patient-and-family-centered care, pediatric medical traumatic stress, social disparities of health) and historical events that define the child life profession.	Applies relevant frameworks and historical perspectives to explain the child life profession.	Critically analyzes, integrates, and evaluates frameworks and historical events to demonstrate fluency in the child life profession.

Competency 2 – Lifespan Development, Child Development, and Family Systems Theories

Knowledge	Skills	Behaviors
Recalls theories related to lifespan and child development and family systems; identifies milestones of human development throughout lifespan across the developmental domains.	Applies theories of lifespan and child development and family systems; uses knowledge of developmental milestones to identify the development of individuals and families.	Critically analyzes, integrates, and evaluates theories of lifespan and child development and family systems in assessment, planning, intervention, evaluation, and advocacy; assesses the development of individuals across the developmental domains.

Competency 3 – Professional Identity and Ethics

Knowledge	Skills	Behaviors
Identifies and defines concepts of ethical tenets, principles, and codes essential in child life; describes competencies of child life professionals.	Applies appropriate ethical tenets, principles, or codes essential in child life; compares one's values, skills, and experiences to the competencies of a child life professional.	Critically analyzes, integrates, and evaluates ethical tenets, principles, and codes in assessment, planning, intervention, and advocacy; summarizes values, skills, and experiences relative to the competencies of a child life professional.

Competency 4 – The Value of Play

Knowledge	Skills	Behaviors
Defines play (e.g., theoretical foundations and types of play) and the evidence-based benefits of play for children.	Applies knowledge of play theory and benefits in assessment, planning, intervention, evaluation, and advocacy in child life.	Critically analyzes, integrates, and evaluates play in assessment, planning, intervention, and advocacy in child life.

Competency 5 – Child Life Assessment

Knowledge	Skills	Behaviors
Identifies foundational concepts of child life assessment (i.e., developmental, psychosocial, and stress potential) and recognizes formal and informal assessment tools.	Explains child life assessment and interprets developmental and contextual factors.	Assesses the developmental and psychosocial needs of children and families to formulate and implement individualized interventions.

Competency 6 – Therapeutic Relationships

Knowledge	Skills	Behaviors
Recalls characteristics and types of therapeutic relationships with infants, children, youth, and families and recognizes key components of culturally responsive communication.	Applies knowledge of therapeutic relationships as well as key components of culturally responsive communication in child life assessment, planning, intervention, evaluation, and advocacy.	Develops therapeutic relationships and takes responsibility for culturally responsive communication in child life assessment, planning, intervention, evaluation, and advocacy.

Competency 7 – Child Life Educational Interventions		
Knowledge	**Skills**	**Behaviors**
Identifies foundational concepts of child life interventions and tools for offering individualized and developmentally grounded education (e.g., preparation, diagnosis education, coping skills training).	Applies knowledge of child life education interventions and tools in assessment, planning, intervention, evaluation, and advocacy.	Critically analyzes, integrates, and evaluates child life education interventions and tools in assessment, planning, intervention, and advocacy.

Competency 8 – Grief, Loss, and Bereavement Support		
Knowledge	**Skills**	**Behaviors**
Identifies foundational concepts of interventions and tools for offering individualized and developmentally grounded grief, loss, and bereavement support (e.g., death disclosure, legacy building, grief support).	Applies knowledge of child life grief, loss, and bereavement interventions and tools in assessment, planning, intervention, evaluation, and advocacy.	Critically analyzes, integrates, and evaluates child life grief, loss, and bereavement interventions and tools in assessment, planning, intervention, and advocacy.

Competency 9 – Child Life Procedure Support		
Knowledge	**Skills**	**Behaviors**
Identifies foundational concepts of child life interventions and tools for offering individualized and developmentally grounded procedure support (e.g., passive and active distraction techniques, coping skills implementation, comfort positions,	Applies knowledge of child life procedure support interventions and tools in assessment, planning, intervention, evaluation, and advocacy.	Critically analyzes, integrates, and evaluates child life procedure support interventions and tools in assessment, planning, intervention, and advocacy.

self-advocacy).		

Competency 10 – Child Life Non-Pharmacological Pain Management

Knowledge	Skills	Behaviors
Identifies foundational concepts of child life interventions and tools for offering individualized and developmentally grounded non-pharmacological pain management (e.g., gate theory, sensory modulation techniques, emotion and problem focused strategies).	Applies knowledge of child life non-pharmacological pain management interventions and tools in assessment, planning, intervention, evaluation, and advocacy.	Critically analyzes, integrates, and evaluates child life non-pharmacological interventions and tools in assessment, planning, intervention, and advocacy.

Competency 11 – Child Life Documentation

Knowledge	Skills	Behaviors
Identifies models, processes, and tools, as well as key components, of child life documentation in patient medical records.	Explains child life documentation and the rationale for documenting child life services in patient medical records.	Critically analyzes, integrates, and transforms observations into documented assessments, plans, interventions, and evaluations in patient medical records.

Competency 12 – Evidence-Based Practice, Scholarly Inquiry, and Research

Knowledge	Skills	Behaviors
Defines key concepts of evidence-based practice (EBP) and articulates its role in the child life profession; identifies types of inquiry in healthcare settings (e.g. quality improvement and research) and recognizes central sources of scholarly information.	Applies evidence from research and scholarship to support child life assessment, planning, intervention, evaluation, and advocacy.	Critically evaluates and synthesizes literature from multiple sources to inform assessment, planning, intervention, evaluation, and advocacy; independently formulates new questions or inquiries related to the child life profession.

Competency 13 – Healthcare Environments and Operations

Knowledge	Skills	Behaviors
Recognizes relationships between healthcare settings and service delivery systems, and recalls basic medical terminology.	Applies knowledge of healthcare service delivery systems and medical terminology in assessment, planning, interventions, evaluations, and advocacy.	Critically analyzes and integrates knowledge and skills to provide child life services in varied healthcare delivery systems in assessment, planning, interventions, evaluations, and advocacy.

Competency 14 – Interprofessional Care and Collaboration

Knowledge	Skills	Behaviors
Defines interprofessional care and identifies the roles and responsibilities of interprofessional team members.	Applies knowledge of interprofessional care in child life assessment, planning, interventions, evaluations, and advocacy.	Critically analyzes and integrates knowledge and skills in interprofessional care for child life assessment, planning, interventions, evaluations, and advocacy.

Competency 15 – Individualized and Responsive Care		
Knowledge	**Skills**	**Behaviors**
Recalls key concepts of cultural identity, ability, and intersectionality in individualized and responsive care for pediatric patients and families.	Applies knowledge of cultural identity, ability, and intersectionality in assessment, planning, intervention, evaluation, and advocacy.	Critically analyzes and integrates cultural identity, ability, and intersectionality into assessment, planning, interventions, evaluations, and advocacy.

Competency 16 – Professional Sustainability		
Knowledge	**Skills**	**Behaviors**
Identifies key concepts of professional boundaries, burnout, and compassion fatigue, and recalls models, tools, and processes for supporting career sustainability.	Explains the rationale for maintaining professional boundaries and using models, tools and processes for career sustainability as a child life professional.	Critically analyzes and integrates professional boundaries and tools, models, and processes of career sustainability into the role of a child life specialist.