

What is Child Life?

The Child Life staff is part of the hospital team taking care of your child and family at Arkansas Children's Hospital. Child Life is available to help your child and their siblings understand and cope with the hospital stay. Child Life Specialists have been trained to explain medical procedures and provide therapeutic opportunities to explore the hospital environment, such as play, medical play, expressive arts and animal assisted therapy. Child Life Specialists strive to make ACH a less stressful experience for both the patient and the family.

Importance of Play

Play is a pleasant and non-threatening way your child learns about the world. Play provides something safe and familiar during stressful times such as hospitalization or medical procedures. The Child Life Program encourages your child to continue playing while in the hospital in order to promote recovery, normal development, and independence.

Pre-Operative and Procedural Teaching

If your child is scheduled to have surgery or procedures (IV, NG, PICC, etc.), a Child Life Specialist is available to prepare and teach you and your child about what he or she may experience. The purpose of pre-operative teaching is to reduce anxiety and let the patient explore and ask questions about their surgery in a safe setting. Specialists use medical play, teaching dolls, real medical equipment, actual pictures of the rooms and people they will see, and a tour of the hospital to prepare children for surgeries and procedures. A pre-admit program is available before hospitalization to prepare children for upcoming surgeries.

Medical Play

Your child may encounter medical equipment in the hospital setting that can cause anxiety and fear. Child Life Specialists can use medical play to help your child express feelings related to the hospital. By using real medical equipment to perform procedures on dolls, the patient can gain a sense of control and understanding.

Expressive Arts

Expressive arts help the patient express feelings when he or she is unable to describe emotions with words. Child Life Specialists are trained to provide music interventions, allowing the patient to use music as a means of coping with hospitalization. Many craft activities in the playroom and teen room are also planned to promote self-expression.



Distraction and Coping

It is not unusual for your child to be afraid of medical procedures. The Child Life Specialist can ease your child's fears by focusing his or her attention on something fun and relaxing, such as blowing bubbles, singing, listening to music, or reading books.

TAILS (Animal Assisted Therapy)

Because your child needs more than medicine to heal, the TAILS (Therapeutic Animal Intervention Lifts Spirits) program provides the patient therapeutic opportunities to interact with trained therapy dogs. Local volunteers and their certified dogs allow the patient to interact with and play with their four-legged friends. These interactions often result in reduced anxiety, reduced pain, and more a positive outlook on the hospital experience. With doctor's orders and parent approval, Child Life Specialists arrange for these special visitors at the patient's bedside.



Play Areas

Playrooms are located throughout the hospital, as well as an outdoor play deck outside the main playroom on the third floor. The Child Life staff or volunteers can show you which playroom meets the needs of your child's age and ability. Because no medical procedures are allowed in these areas children see these playrooms as a safe place.

- Siblings and child visitors under 14 may visit the playroom with the patient. The adult caregiver must stay with visitors under 14.
- If the patient is on isolation or has had a fever in the last 24 hours, he or she should not be in the playroom. Toys can be borrowed for your child to play with in the rooms.
- The patient must be at least 12 years of age to go to the Teen Room.
- The patient can come to the playroom with staff or a caregiver during non-playroom hours.

For Playroom and Teen room hours please check at your nurses desk.

Siblings and Child Visitors

Siblings and friends are important parts of the hospital experience, both for the siblings and the patient. Visiting a patient in an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) for the first time can be hard for children because the sights and sounds are new to them. Child Life Specialists are available to prepare young visitors before they go into one of our ICU's (PICU, NICU, CVICU, Burn Unit). Preparation for their visit can reduce anxiety and offer a safe setting for questions about the patient and his/her condition.

It is important that siblings and visitors are healthy and do not have a fever, cold, cough or unexplained rash.

Fear not illness, for this place of care, love and hope is for you.

Volunteers

Volunteers are a vital part of the child life team. Volunteers work in activity areas to provide one-on-one play with the patient in a group setting. When a patient is not able to leave their rooms, volunteers can go to the patient's room to provide age-appropriate activities and opportunities for play on an individual basis.

Channel 35 – KBS

Kid's Broadcasting System Hospital Movie Channel

Canal 38 en Espanol

Receive a movie guide from your nurse's station, playroom, Teen room or Child Life and Education staff.

How You Can Help

- Offer your child choices when possible.
- Allow you child to express feelings and ask questions.
- Cuddle and play with your child.
- Attend playroom activities if possible.
- Be optimistic.
- Decorate your child's room with familiar things (blanket, pillow, sippy cup, pictures, movies, music, toys).



If You Need More Information

Feel free to contact the Child Life and Education Department with any questions at (501) 364-1412 or extension 4-1412.

While in the hospital your Child Life Specialist is:

She/he can be reached at extension: _____



Child Life Services

Child Life and Education Department



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PEC#: C0526.9.9



Arkansas Children's Hospital



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