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WITH WORLD-CLASS DOCTORS FROM
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Medicine

Child Life 101: Introduction to Services Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

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What is a Certified Child Life Specialist (CCLS)?

What is a CCLS?

- **Certified Child Life Specialist (CCLS):** An expert in the specific intersection of psychosocial, emotional, & cognitive child development AND stress/trauma/harm to that development
 - CCLSs are credentialed clinicians
 - CCLSs are deemed essential by the AAP and ACS
 - Required for Level I and Level II pediatric trauma status (2023)
 - Required to meet minimum standards for Level IV NICU (2023)
 - CCLSs are specialized to provide unique and individualized care to patients/families



What is a CCLS?

- **Certified Child Life Specialists** utilize evidence-based assessments to develop care plans and execute interventions that reduce and/or prevent the adverse effects of hospitalization, health care encounters, and/or other potentially stressful experiences
 - Promote optimal development
 - Increase positive coping
 - Support the psychosocial, cognitive, and emotional health of patients and family systems



Child Life Consults

Patient Support

- Co-treat with multidisciplinary team
- Developmental support
- Diagnosis Education/ Change in Prognosis
- Emotional/coping support
- Procedural Preparation & Support
- Processing/Understanding Difficult News
- Therapeutic Normalization
- Treatment compliance

Parental Support

- Align family goals with medical goals
- Difficult Conversations
- Emotional/Coping support
- Milestone/Legacy Building
- Parent education
- Processing/Understanding Difficult News

Sibling Support

- Diagnosis Education/ Change in Prognosis
- Difficult Conversations
- Emotional/coping support
- Processing/Understanding Difficult News
- Psychological preparation
- Therapeutic Normalization

End of Life Support

- Difficult conversations
- Emotional/Coping support
- Family meetings/education
- Fetal demise consults
- Keepsakes + Memory Making
- Sibling support

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American Academy of Pediatrics + Child Life Partnership

AAP Policy Statement (2014):

“CCLSs are part of an interdisciplinary, patient- and family-centered model of care, collaborating with the family, physicians, advance practice providers, nurses, social workers, and other members of the health care team to develop a comprehensive plan of care.”

AAP + CCLS Partnership

*All quotes from AAP Policy Statement (2014)

- “Child life services **improve quality and outcomes** in pediatric care as well as the patient and family experience...child life services **help to contain costs** by reducing the length of stay and decreasing the need for sedation and analgesics.”
- “In addition to **advocating for the appropriate use of analgesics**, CCLSs are...**directly involved** in the utilization of **nonpharmacologic pain management** techniques...before and/or during distressing medical procedures...Strategies such as swaddling, oral sucrose, vibratory stimulation, breathing techniques, distraction [alternative focus], and visual imagery have been shown to decrease behavioral distress and pain...”
- “Siblings of pediatric patients present with their own unique anxieties and psychosocial needs, needs that are often not assessed or addressed. **Siblings**, much like children of adult patients, **can be helped [by a CCLS]** to comprehend a family member’s illness **via therapeutic play and educational interventions** or by offering support during hospital visits, including critical care and end-of-life situations.”
- “**CCLSs** help facilitate the family’s adjustment to the child’s illness and health care experience. They can **help family members understand their child’s response to treatment and support caregiving roles...**”

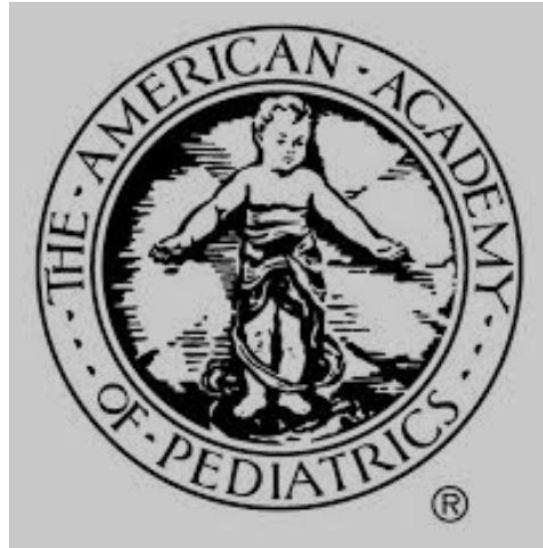
AAP Policy Statement (2014):

“The CCLSs’ psychosocial and developmental expertise and their keen awareness of the benefits of patient- and family-centered care provide a useful perspective at the systems level.”

AAP + CCLS Partnership

*All quotes from AAP Policy Statement (2014)

- “Child life services should be included...as an essential part of hospital-based pediatric care...[and] should be available to meet identified patient or family needs 7 days a week.”
- “Child life services contribute to an organization’s efforts to meet the standards set forth by The Joint Commission with regard to effective communication, patient- and family-centered care, age-specific competencies, and cultural competence.”



Association of Child Life Professionals (ACLP) Value Proposition Statement

CCLSs Elevate And Enhance Medical Care

“...comprehensive preparation, procedural support, and coping skills education [by a CCLS]... are associated with accelerated healing.”

ACLP Value Proposition Statement

[*ACLP Value Proposition Statement Link](#)

CCLSs promote health literacy & treatment adherence

- **Certified Child Life Specialists...[reduce] unnecessary emergency department visits**, preventable hospital **readmissions**, unscheduled **clinic visits**, and use of **rescue medications** in chronically ill populations.”

CCLS promote health throughout the lifespan

- “**Certified Child Life Specialists mitigate pediatric medical traumatic stress** and improve mental health outcomes for infants, children, adolescents and emerging adults, and families...[they] **attenuate the negative physical and psychosocial effects** of stress, loss, and grief - including stroke, heart attack and high blood pressure **in adulthood thereby cultivating health-promoting behaviors throughout the lifespan.**”

CCLSs “...[optimize] the use of resources and [limit] waste”

- **With Certified Child Life Specialists** “...patient safety, access, and throughput are increased, while staffing costs and post-anesthesia length of stay are reduced - and **significant cost savings are realized.**”

CCLSs promote hospital fidelity

- “[**Certified Child Life Specialists**] implement an array of play-based, coping-focused techniques shown to ameliorate pain, lower anxiety, reduce distress, and **increase satisfaction with - and loyalty to - institutions of care...**”

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Child Life + NICU

ACLP Value Proposition Statement

[*ACLP Value Proposition Statement Link](#)

CCLs optimize outcomes for premature infants

- “Specifically in infancy, ***developmentally supportive care***...results in ***reduced length of stay, earlier transitions to oral feedings, increased weight gain, and better neurodevelopmental outcomes*** for premature infants.”

CCLs assess for, prevent, & alleviate PMTS symptoms in infants

- “In the context of their targeted education and training, ***CCLs implement developmental play, nonpharmacological pain management, parent education and engagement***, and help to ***regulate environmental stimulation*** based on the infant’s social emotional cues and needs.”

CCLs promote optimal attachment

- ***...disruptions to parent/caregiver participation*** in the child’s care ***can jeopardize infant-parent attachment*** and further ***complicate the child’s ability to achieve normative developmental milestones***...As practitioners who support the psychosocial needs of the entire family, ***CCLs empower parents/caregivers to play active roles in their infant’s daily care***...”

CCLs help maintain positive link between parents & medical team

- “CCLs provide targeted play-based, educational, and therapeutic solutions to ***address medical misconceptions, ameliorate the consequences*** of these misconceptions, and ***reinforce honest, accurate, and developmentally appropriate information***.”

Common Stressors

- Fear of pain
- Fear of body mutilation
- Privacy/Body Image
- Separation anxiety
- Loss of control
- Lack of mastery
- Change in routine
- Magical thinking

Support System

- Siblings
- Religious organizations
- Caregiver support/anxiety
- Educational environments
- Close friends/extended family/peers

Cognitive Development

- Sensorimotor (birth-2 years)
- Preoperational (2-5 yrs)
- Concrete Operational (5-12 yrs)
- Formal Operational (12 yrs+)

Common Interventions

- Psychological preparation
- Medical Play
- Diagnosis education
- Normalization of the hospital environment
- Processing and understanding difficult news
- Procedural support
- Developmentally appropriate distraction
- Therapeutic Play
- Developmental Play

Psychosocial Development

- Trust vs Mistrust (<1 year)
- Autonomy vs Shame & Doubt (~ages 1-2)
- Initiative vs Guilt (~ages 3-5)
- Industry vs Inferiority (~ages 6-12)
- Identity vs Role Confusion (~ages 13-25)

Emotional Coping/Needs

- Pain Management
- Sadness
- Over/under stimulation
- Patient's coping style
- Fear/doubt/worry
- Anxiety/distress

Healthcare Variables

- Mobility
- ICU and/or emergent experience(s)
- Previous hospital experience(s)
- First hospitalization

What goes into a



child life assessment?

Child Life + NICU Interventions

Patient Support

- Developmental support
 - Sensory stimulation
 - Progression
 - Attachment/Bonding
- Procedural Support
- Co-treat with multidisciplinary team

Parental Support

- Milestone/Legacy Building
- Parent Education
- Aligning family goals with medical goals
- Emotional/Coping support

Sibling Support

- Diagnosis education/change in prognosis
- Visiting baby in NICU
- Bonding
- Transition home

Bereavement Support

- Family meetings/education
- Keepsakes + Memory Making
- Fetal demise consults

Child Life Initiatives

Current Initiatives

- Implementation of comprehensive sibling support program to minimize stress & trauma to sibling psychosocial, cognitive, and emotional development, promote positive coping throughout NICU admission, (including preventing developmental regression), and support positive transition home w/baby
 - Developmentally appropriate education about baby, baby's medical supports, why they are in the NICU, etc
 - Normalization of NICU environment to provide developmentally appropriate opportunities for mastery and control
 - Developmentally supportive opportunities to process, share fear/worries/frustrations
 - Promoting and supporting positive bonds between parent/baby, parent/sibling(s), and sibling(s)/baby while parent & baby are in the NICU

Current Initiatives

- Milestone/Holiday celebrations
 - Engages in foundational tenets of family-centered care
 - Promotes therapeutic normalization and acts of caregiving in NICU environment
 - Fosters overall positive coping and emotional well-being while pt is in the NICU
- Developmental Stimulation
 - Ensure patients receive appropriate developmental supports and engagement to reduce effects of NICU admission on psychosocial, cognitive, and emotional development
- Parent/Baby Bonding
 - Providing support and education to parents/caregivers to directly promote the formation of positive and secure attachments via touch, reading, Wyatt the Whale/Tommy the Turtle, play, etc.

Child Life Initiatives

Goals

- Expand non-pharmacologic pain management support/education to families and staff to promote neuroprotective measures and minimize stress/trauma to overall development
- Parent Orientation Class
 - Normalize sights, sounds, rules, & regulations in the NICU
 - Empower caregivers to take baby's temperature, change diapers, understand comfort positioning/kangaroo care
 - Help set expectations for steps to be completed for a successful discharge
 - Overall improve coping and comfortability with cares and manage expectations
- Parental education
 - Weekly goals sheet
 - Packets for discharge
 - Packet w/development by adjusted age

Goals

- Implement comprehensive bedside reading program when babies hit milestone of 32 weeks during NICU admission or are admitted between 32-34 weeks
 - Goal to expand to all babies admitted to the NICU regardless of projected length of stay
- Creation of "developmental corner" near milestone cards with tips and info on developmental care team (CCLS, SLP, OT/Rehab)
- Implement monthly programming
 - 1 program/week
 - Decorate onesies
 - Create memory boxes
 - Scrapbooking/journaling
 - Create high contrast cards*
- Create volunteer program to support daily stimulation for babies medically cleared

Goals

- Expand sibling program
 - Sibling Kits
 - Book
 - Invisible string (6y+)
 - Feelings book (> 6y)
 - "Letter" from baby
 - Photo frame to decorate
 - NICU coloring book + Crayons
 - Journal
 - Draw pictures/write letters to baby
 - Write/Illustrate a book for caregiver to read to baby at bedside
- Expand child life services to clinic
 - Establish therapeutic relationships and coping plans before NICU admission

Child Life Initiatives

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Benefits of Reading

LANGUAGE LEARNING

Your baby's language grows by hearing different words, sounds, and tones of voice. Hearing you read out loud helps your baby learn to talk.

BUILDS BABY'S BRAIN

Your baby's brain is growing really fast. Reading helps build parts of your baby's brain so it can work faster and stronger.

PROMOTES BONDING

Your baby knows the sound of your voice. When you read together it creates feelings of love, caring, and safety. These feelings help build healthy bonds.

CREATES ROUTINE

Reading every day helps build a routine. The consistency of a routine helps baby feel safe and learn to trust you. Reading at night can help build a calm down routine that helps baby fall asleep.

STRENGTHENS SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL SKILLS

Reading helps your baby learn about all kinds of people and places. It also helps your baby learn how to name and handle different emotions.

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BUILD A HOME library

LOVE MAKES A FAMILY
Author: Sophie Beer
Developmental Impact:

- Language Skills: Helps build parts of brain for learning + understanding
- Social and Emotional Skills
- Cultural Diversity: Helps baby learn our world has many different ways to love people and/or be a part of a family

SHAKE MY SILLIES OUT
Author: Raffi (Author), Maple Lam (Illustrator)
Developmental Impact:

- Language Skills: Helps build parts of brain for learning + understanding
- Coping Skills: Gross Motor Skills (whole-body movements)
- Colors: Animals; Music

LOOK, LOOK!
Author: Peter Linenthal
Developmental Impact:

- Language Skills: Helps build parts of brain for learning + understanding
- Early learning for connecting eyes and brain
- Sensory Support: Shapes

PAT THE BUNNY
Author: Dorothy Kunhardt
Developmental Impact:

- Language Skills: Helps build parts of brain for learning + understanding
- Fine Motor Skills (small, precise movements; hand-eye coordination)
- Sensory support: Colors; Animals

MY GOALS

"Name"

WEEK OF: FEB 24-28

OT/REHAB	FEEDING/SLP
Text here	Text here
DEVELOPMENTAL	DEVELOPMENTAL
Visual:	Tummy Time:
Auditory:	Reading:
NOTES/QUESTIONS	
Text here	

Child Life Initiatives



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