**MASTER OF ARTS IN CHILD LIFE**

In this program, students are equipped with specialized training to respond to the developmental, social, and emotional needs of hospitalized children and their families. They learn to mitigate the impact of medical trauma while preserving basic developmental pathways and family support systems in hospitals and medical community settings. Graduates of the program receive an MA in education. The program meets the academic standards of the Child Life Council, and graduates may apply for the child life specialist certification, provided they meet the Child Life Council's eligibility requirements.

This degree may also be combined with an early childhood special education credential (https://catalog.mills.edu/graduate/programs/education/early-childhood-special-education-credential).

**Program Goals**

- Provide students with many different theoretical perspectives and scientific and practical knowledge to understand and support human development and learning
- Prepare reflective and critical thinkers who examine issues about the development of infants and young children and their relationships in various contexts: school, hospital, family, community, and with an understanding of culture
- Prepare students to work as part of a team and to develop collegial relationships with fellow students and faculty
- Prepare students to interact with children with medical needs and their families in a family-centered manner guided by theories of human growth and development
- Prepare students to participate as a member of a multidisciplinary team

**Distinctive Features**

- **Specialized faculty:** The program’s faculty includes experienced professionals and researchers, as well as certified child-life specialists.
- **Theory-based practice:** The program is firmly grounded in child development theories and in psychology. The students learn to use attachment- and relationship-based approaches, as well as developmentally appropriate play techniques, to support normal development despite medical crises and stress.
- **International recognition:** The program has graduates working in Japan and other hospital settings around the world. It is one of roughly 480 documented child life programs worldwide. All of these programs share common theories and practices.

**Course Work**

Course work prepares students to help children manage stressful and potentially traumatic medical experiences by integrating theory and practice. Some classes focus on the hospitalized child and include relevant fieldwork. Other courses provide a broad cultural, historical, philosophical, and empirically based foundation for the field of child life. In addition to learning basic child-life skills, students are encouraged to take a reflective, inquiry orientation toward the profession. See the Requirements page for a list of courses required for this program; see the Course Descriptions (https://catalog.mills.edu/graduate/programs/education/#coursestext) page for paragraph-length descriptions of individual courses.

**Fieldwork and Hospital Internships**

Students participate in two semesters of field experience at the Mills College Children's School (https://www.mills.edu/academics/graduate-programs/education/mills-college-childrens-school.php) for a minimum of 15 hours each week. At this laboratory school, they learn to work with infants and toddlers as well as preschool and school-age children.

During the second year of the program students intern in a hospital environment. Students are required to obtain a minimum of 480 hours of clinical supervision with a certified child-life specialist (as required by the Certifying Committee of the Child Life Council). The program and the field placement’s clinical supervisors form a team to educate the students. Together, the team aims to facilitate students’ entrance into the profession of child life and to enhance the quality of psychosocial care and services delivered to children and families.

Each fieldwork experience is supported by a seminar that meets once a week. Seminars are designed to encourage students to become reflective professionals through self-evaluation and peer-evaluation activities.

**Career Opportunities**

Many of our graduates are currently working at Lucille Packard’s Children's Hospital, UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital, Oakland and UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital, San Francisco—three of the largest programs in the San Francisco Bay Area. The Director of UCSF Benioff, San Francisco is a graduate of the Mills College School of Education. Our alumnae/i also pursue jobs in child life in hospitals.

**Requirements**

**Master of Arts in Child Life (MA/ECE/CL)**

**Minimum of 44 semester course credits**

This graduate program leads to both a master’s degree and the eligibility for child life examination. The program meets the academic standards of the Association of Child Life Professionals (ACLP) and has the required courses for graduates to sit for the Child Life Specialist Certification Exam. Applicants to the Child Life Program must have a minimum of 200 hours (preferably more) of volunteering experience in a pediatric hospital setting under the supervision of a certified child life specialist prior to entering the program. Internship requirements are set by the Association of Child Life Professionals. For details on the standards and requirements, consult with the advisor of the Child Life Program at Mills College. Students will plan their course schedule with their faculty advisor. The following sequence of core courses represents a typical student’s movement through the program:

**Course** | **Title** | **Credits**
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EDUC 214 | Family Systems and Cultural Diversity: Connections with Schools, Communities, and Hospital Setting | 3
EDUC 231 | Assessment and Intervention for Children with Special Needs | 3
EDUC 238 | California Community College History, Politics and Policy | 3
EDUC 242 | The Hospitalized Child | 3
Students may hold an in-progress status until an internship is secured. The in-progress status will only last through the third year of students’ enrollment at Mills.

Related Programs

Teacher Education

- Multiple Subject Credential (https://catalog.mills.edu/graduate/programs/education/multiple-subject-credential)
  - MA in Education, Early Childhood Education (https://catalog.mills.edu/graduate/programs/education/ma-early-childhood-education)
- Single Subject Credential in Humanities (Art, English, or Social Science) (https://catalog.mills.edu/graduate/programs/education/single-subject-credential-humanities)
- Single Subject Credential in Mathematics or Science (https://catalog.mills.edu/graduate/programs/education/single-subject-credential-math-science)
- MA in Education (MEET) (https://catalog.mills.edu/graduate/programs/education/ma-education-emphasis-teaching)
- Language, Culture, and Trauma Certificate in Teaching (https://catalog.mills.edu/graduate/programs/education/language-culture-trauma-certificate-teaching)

Early Childhood Education

- MA in Early Childhood Education—MA/ECE (https://catalog.mills.edu/graduate/programs/education/ma-early-childhood-education)
  - Early Childhood Multiple Subject Credential—MA/ECE/MSC (https://catalog.mills.edu/graduate/programs/education/early-childhood-multiple-subjects-credential)
  - MA in Child Life—MA/ECE/CL (p. 1)
    - Early Childhood Special Education Credential—MA/ECE/ECSE (https://catalog.mills.edu/graduate/programs/education/early-childhood-special-education-credential)

- MA in Early Childhood Leadership—MA/ECL (https://catalog.mills.edu/graduate/programs/education/ma-early-childhood-leadership)

Educational Leadership

- MA in Educational Leadership (https://catalog.mills.edu/graduate/programs/education/ma-educational-leadership)
  - Early Childhood Leadership (https://catalog.mills.edu/graduate/programs/education/ma-early-childhood-leadership)
  - Independent School Leadership (https://catalog.mills.edu/graduate/programs/education/ma-educational-leadership-emphasis-independent-school-leadership)
- MA in Educational Leadership (online) (https://catalog.mills.edu/graduate/programs/education/ma-educational-leadership-online)
- Joint MBA/MA in Educational Leadership (https://catalog.mills.edu/graduate/joint-degree-programs/joint-mbama-educational-leadership)
- Doctorate (EdD) in Educational Leadership (https://catalog.mills.edu/graduate/programs/education/edd/#requirementstext)
  - focus on Community College Leadership (https://catalog.mills.edu/graduate/programs/education/edd/#!)
  - Administrative Services Credential (https://catalog.mills.edu/graduate/programs/education/administrative-services-credential)

Infant Mental Health

- Infant Mental Health (https://catalog.mills.edu/graduate/programs/education/ma-infant-mental-health)
- Infant Mental Health with Special Education Credential (https://catalog.mills.edu/graduate/programs/education/ma-infant-mental-health-with-credential)

Accelerated Degree Programs

- BA/MA Education/Teaching Credential (https://catalog.mills.edu/undergraduate/accelerated-degree-programs/bama-teacher-education)
- BA/MA Infant Mental Health (https://catalog.mills.edu/undergraduate/accelerated-degree-programs/bama-infant-mental-health)

Certificates

Waldorf Professional Development Certificate (https://catalog.mills.edu/graduate/programs/education/certificate-in-waldorf-education)