**CHILD LIFE**

We are proposing to add a concentration in Child Life to the HDFS BS degree to better meet the increasing demand of current and future students in careers as a Child Life Specialist. While the degree does not automatically lead to certification as a Child Life Specialist upon graduation, it does directly align with coursework requirements set forth by the Child Life Certification Commission ([childlife.org](https://www.childlife.org/certification/becoming-certified/requirements-after-2019)) so that students are prepared and eligible to complete remaining certification requirements.

*From ChildLife.org:* Child life specialists are trained professionals with expertise in helping children and their families overcome life’s most challenging events, and the importance of their services has been well documented. The following are just a few resources highlighting the need for child life services in hospitals and a variety of other settings:

[American Academy of Pediatrics Statement on Child Life](https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2020/12/24/peds.2020-040261)

[Evidence-Based Practice Statements on Child Life](https://www.childlife.org/docs/default-source/research-ebp/ebp-statements.pdf?sfvrsn=6395bd4d_2)

[How a Child Life Specialist Can Help You](https://www.childlife.org/the-child-life-profession/the-case-for-child-life)

Child Life Specialists collaborate with families and health care provides to:

* Prepare children for medical procedures or treatment using developmentally appropriate language
* Introduce coping strategies to help reduce anxiety and enhance cooperation with the health care team
* Provide support and distraction during medical procedures
* Offer opportunities for play and expressive activities to encourage typical development during challenging circumstances
* Promote family-centered care by providing information, advocacy, and support to pediatric patients and their families

***Concentration Rationale:***

* The addition of this concentration listed on transcripts would strengthen UofA students’ academic credentials and give them an advantage in the highly competitive internship and career field of Child Life.
* Based on current (2022) advising reports, an estimated quarter of HDFS BS students are interested in pursuing Child Life. Because of this interest, the RSO Child Life Professions was formed in 2019. There are currently 34 members in the RSO and Donia Timby, an instructor in the School of Human Environmental Sciences, serves as their advisor.

 ***Growth and Economic Indicators:***

* Per the UofA Treasurer’s Office calculator, the 120-hour HDFS BS degree is estimated to cost resident students $38,289.60 in tuition and fees.
* A BLS market analysis indicates that the Child Life Career field has an upward trajectory with a projected employment growth through 2026 of **7%.**
* In 2017, the median annual income for Child Life Specialists was **$60,380** (which was higher than the $37,690 median annual wage for all work, [US Bureau of Labor Statistics](https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2018/youre-a-what/child-life-specialist.htm?view_full)). According to the Child Life Professional Compensation Survey, the annual salary for specialists has remained relatively stable from [2012](https://www.childlife.org/docs/default-source/the-child-life-profession/2012salarysurveyreportcomplete_uploaded.pdf?sfvrsn=8)-[2021](https://www.childlife.org/resources/for-child-life-specialists/salary-survey). Average salary is higher for specialists with advanced degrees or in leadership roles.
* Based on stable and above-average salaries following graduation, and career field projected growth, it is important that we offer a degree concentration that efficiently and transparently prepares students to pursue certification as a Child Life Specialist following graduation.

**LIFESPAN DEVELOPMENT IN DIVERSE CONTEXTS**

***Concentration Rationale:***The Lifespan Development in Diverse Contexts proposed concentration meets the needs of HDFS BS students in three key ways:

1. Provides a foundation in three important areas of family science career areas: research skills, professional helping skills, and knowledge of diverse communities.
2. Reduces the overall HDFS core to allow students to tailor their preparation for the many career options available to HDFS graduates.
3. Creates an educational track for students who want to work with children or families, but are not interested in the specific career of Child Life, *or* who want to continue their education in an advanced degree program (e.g., MS, JD, PhD, EdD, etc.)

*From the* [*National Council on Family Relations*](https://www.ncfr.org/about/what-family-science/careers)*:* Family Science scholars and professionals are diverse, and so are their careers. Their Family Science knowledge and expertise means they are uniquely qualified for many types of jobs that work to better understand, strengthen, and empower families — research, teaching, policy work, and many professional practice roles.

Specifically, NCFR identifies 10 unique job fields our graduates are eligible to work in that broadly fall under the occupational field of Community and Social Service ([Bureau of Labor Statistics](https://www.bls.gov/ooh/community-and-social-service/home.htm)). Given the numerous job placements available to students, it is critical that they have sufficient elective options to build their competencies in the family or developmental science niche they aim to work in.

***Growth and Economic Indicators:***

* Per the UofA Treasurer’s Office calculator, the 120-hour HDFS BS degree is estimated to cost resident students $38,289.60 in tuition and fees.
* A BLS market analysis indicates that Community and Social Service careers have an upward trajectory with a projected employment growth through 2030 of **17%**, which is much faster than the average occupational field.
* Although the career options for graduates of the Lifespan concentration are numerous, 2020 data from the BLS indicates the annual median wage for bachelor’s level Community and Social Service careers ranges from **$47,660** to **$55,690** ([US Bureau of Labor Statistics](https://www.bls.gov/ooh/community-and-social-service/home.htm)). This is increased from 2015 BLS data reporting an annual median salary of $42,010 for Community and Social Service jobs.
* Based on diverse career options, projected occupational growth, and upward trending salary, this is a vital concentration option for students who aim to work or advance study in the field of human development and family science.