

Child Life Services

At McMaster Children's Hospital we care for children and their families. You and your family are an important part of the team of people that will care for your child. Together we will make your experience as positive as we can.

Reading this information sheet will help you learn about the Child Life Specialist, one of the health professionals on your child's health care team.

How can a Child Life Specialist help us?

Being in the hospital can be stressful for your child and your family. It can also be stressful for your other children to have their brother or sister in the hospital.

The Child Life Specialist can ease stress and anxiety, and help your children and family learn to cope and continue to grow.

The Child Life Specialist does this by providing:

- play and learning activities to help your child understand his or her illness and treatment
- support and encouragement to you and your child



Play activities



The Child Life Specialist provides play activities that match your child's age, ability and needs. Activities may be done alone or in a group. Special rooms are designed to welcome children and teens. If your child cannot use the playroom, the Child Life Specialist can come to your child's room.

Play is very important to help children and teens:

- understand what is happening to them or their family member
- prepare for surgery, medical tests or dressing changes
- express their fears, frustrations and concerns
- learn to cope with difficult parts of their care, like having pain or being away from family and friends
- be with their family and other children
- keep their minds and bodies active
- continue their normal development and everyday activities



Preparation

Your child and family will feel less anxious and more in control when they know what to expect. The Child Life Specialist and other members of the health care team will plan learning activities to help your child and family prepare for what will happen in the hospital. The Child Life Specialist will give information to your child that is geared to his/her age and level of understanding.

Support and encouragement



The Child Life Specialist provides emotional support to help you:

- understand your child's reactions to illness or being in the hospital
 - learn what you can do to support and encourage your child
 - continue healthy family relationships during illness or hospital stay
-

Support services

Preparing for surgery

- Before surgery your child or teen will learn what will happen to them, in a way they can understand.
- Pictures, teaching dolls and safe medical equipment may be used to help your child prepare for surgery.



Family Support Program

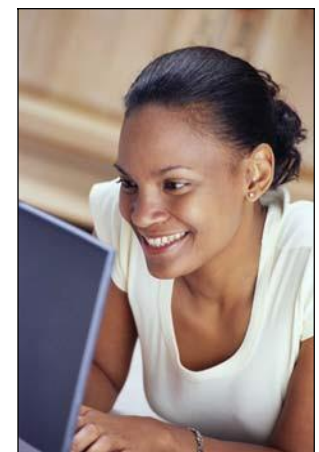
- This program allows a parent or guardian to go with their child into the operating room until their child is asleep. After surgery, parents are able to be with their child in the recovery area.
- This program is available Monday to Friday, during the day, when a volunteer is on duty.

Playrooms

- The playrooms on the ward and in the clinics are safe places for your children to enjoy planned or free play time.
- Video games and movies are available.
- Children must be supervised at all times while in playrooms.

Evening Teen Program

- There is an area designed for teenage patients and families in the lounge between Wards 3B and 3C.
- Special activities are planned for hospital patients, Monday through Thursday evenings.



Volunteers

- During certain times of the day, specially trained volunteers provide comfort and cuddles to babies, as well as leisure activities for all other patients. This program gives parents a chance to have a break.

Outpatient care

- A Child Life Specialist can help children of all ages who continue to have fears, worries and trouble coping even after they leave the hospital.
- Please speak with your Pediatrician for more information.

How can I reach a Child Life Specialist?

Your nurse can call the Child Life Specialist for you. During the day, the Child Life Specialist will visit with you in your child's room.