

An article review of:

Lerkwick, J. (2019) An exploration of the roles of certified child life specialist and registered play therapist in the United States. *Int J Pediatric Res* 5:049.

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by Heather Blasius on behalf of the GLACLP Research Committee.

According to Lerkwick (2019), due to the recognition of the importance of play for childhood and the coping of stress and trauma, two organizations were formed in 1982 The Child Life Council (CLC) and the Association of Play Therapy (APT). Play is a child's natural way of communicating and exploring new experiences, it is universal. This article will clarify the differences between Certified Child Life Specialist and Play Therapist with what role they both play and their training.

Child Life Specialists seek to meet the emotional and developmental needs of those children in the healthcare environment. They are child development experts that help prepare children for unique healthcare experiences through play to reduce the trauma and stress that comes with this time of their lives. Child Life Specialists embrace the value of play as healing to enhance the growth and developments of infants, children and youth through assessment, intervention, prevention, advocacy, and education. Child Life Specialists accomplish this through coping strategies which can include education, age-appropriate information, nondirective play and medical play.

Play Therapy (APT) was established with the desire to promote the advancement of play therapy to help prevent or resolve psychosocial difficulties and achieve optimal growth and development. Play therapy can be used for an array of psychosocial and psychological issues pertaining to children. This also can help through the use of toys to allow them to unlock sticky

emotions and to prevent, resolve, and heal from psychological and emotional struggles. This is used for treating mental and behavioral health issues that can be utilized in any setting, issue, and population.

Education and License can differ between these two professions. Certified Child Life Specialists (CCLS) are required to have a minimum of a Bachelor's degree in any field, with coursework requirements surrounding child development, play, grief, family systems, and research and child life professional practice. They also must complete a certification exam as well as a 600 hour internship under a supervisor of CCLS. CCLS are not mental health professionals and are not required for a license. On the other hand, Registered Play Therapists (RPT) are mental health professionals that are required to hold a clinical mental health license and a Master's degree. Their coursework includes all clinical mental health training as well as additional training in child therapy. They also must complete two years of clinical work, 2000 hours of supervised clinical experience and 500 hours of supervised play therapy, and complete a minimum of 150 hours of play therapy specific training.

Scope of Practice for these two fields overlap and align, even though there are many differences between CCLS and RPT. They both believe the same principle: Play has a natural healing element to it and children are benefiting no matter the setting.

Lerwick (2019) has a few recommendations including that healthcare professionals should seek to clearly understand the difference in the role and training of these two professions. The ethical implications of practicing outside each scope are severe. Both roles are fulfilling and it is important to work together to enhance the delivery of patient care to children in their care.