

LET'S CELEBRATE!

70 YEARS OF EMMA PLANK'S CHILD LIFE PROGRAM AND GLACLP 15 YEAR ANNIVERSARY!

October 3–4, 2025



MetroHealth

**METROHEALTH MEDICAL CENTER
CLEVELAND, OH**



2025 ANNUAL GLACLP CHILD LIFE CONFERENCE



REGISTRATION OPEN JULY 9 – SEPTEMBER 5

EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION JULY 9– AUGUST 9

- In-Person & Pre-Recorded Sessions
- Organized Networking Opportunities
- ACLP Representation
- Professional Intensive
- Student Symposium
- Celebrating Emma Plank & GLACLP

UP TO 15 PDUS

Weekend Schedule at a Glance

Professionals ONLY

Time reflects Eastern Standard Time (EST)

➞ **FRIDAY**
OCT 3, 2025

➞ **10:30 AM – 6:00 PM**

10:30–1:00 PM

CHECK IN

11:00 AM

**TOUR/EDUCATORS & STUDENT
COORDINATORS MEETING**

11:30 AM

LUNCH OPENS

12:00 PM

**GLACLP MEMBERSHIP MEETING
WITH ACLP**

01:00 PM

PROFESSIONAL INTENSIVE

02:45 PM

SESSION 1

03:50 PM

SESSION 2

5:00 PM

EMMA PLANK CELEBRATION



Weekend Schedule at a Glance

Time reflects Eastern Standard Time (EST)

➞ **SATURDAY,
OCT 4, 2025**

➞ **7:30 AM – 5:00 PM**

7:30–9:00AM

CHECK IN

8:30 AM

WELCOME INTRODUCTION

8:45 AM

**CELEBRATE, PAINT, NETWORK &
MORE**

9:45 AM

BREAK

10:00 AM

SESSION 1

11:30 AM

LUNCH/NETWORKING TABLES

12:45 PM

SESSION 2

1:45 PM

BREAK



Weekend Schedule at a Glance

Time reflects Eastern Standard Time (EST)

➞ SATURDAY, OCT 4, 2025 CONTINUED

2:00 PM

SESSION 3

3:00 PM

BREAK

3:15 PM

PLENARY

4:15 PM

CLOSING REMARKS

4:30 PM

TOUR

SEE YOU NEXT YEAR!



FRIDAY, 10/3

10:30 - 1:00 PM: Check-In *Time reflects Eastern Standard Time (EST)*

11:00-12:00 PM: Educators/Student Coordinators Meeting
& Tour of MetroHealth Medical Center

LUNCH OPEN 11:30 AM

12:00 - 12:45 PM: GLACLP Membership Meeting with ACLP

1:00-2:30 PM: Professional Intensive (Not Recorded)



Divna Wheelwright, MA, CCLS
***Reconstructing the Play Lady:
Gender, Power, and the Politics of
Care in Child Life***

Target population: Professionals
(1.5 PDU, Professional Development)

2:30 - 2:45: Break

2:45-3:45 PM: Session One

From Destiny to Agency: How Adlerian Theory Shatters the Nature-Nurture Binary *Target population: All*
(1.0 PDU, Ethics or Prof. Resp.)

Geovanni Vazquez, PhD, LCSW, LMHC, LADC I, CCHW

3:50 - 4:50PM: Session Two

When Zero Tolerance for Violence in Healthcare Impacts Child Life Services *Target population: Professionals, Leaders or Educators*
(1.0 PDU, Any)

Jennifer Fieten, MA, CCLS

5:00 PM: Optional Emma Plank Celebration

6:30 PM: Optional Social Dinner Off-Site



FRIDAY, 10/3

Time reflects Eastern Standard Time (EST)

Reconstructing the Play Lady: Gender, Power, and the Politics of Care in Child Life

- Critically analyze the historical construction of the "Play Lady" archetype through the lens of feminist theory, with attention to race, class, and gender as intersecting systems of power.
- Evaluate the ways in which gendered expectations and caring labor have shaped the professional identity of child life specialists, and how these dynamics continue to influence perceptions of legitimacy and authority within healthcare settings.
- Identify the limitations of dominant (white, liberal) feminist frameworks in explaining the full spectrum of challenges faced by child life professionals, especially those from marginalized backgrounds.
- Examine how structural power imbalances in the hospital context affect both professional identity and patient care, using the lived experiences of child life specialists to explore themes of empowerment and disenfranchisement.
- Articulate strategies to reclaim play as a radical, relational, and culturally responsive act, resisting its historical dismissal as "non-work" and highlighting its central role in psychosocial care.



FRIDAY, 10/3

Time reflects Eastern Standard Time (EST)

From Destiny to Agency: How Adlerian Theory Shatters the Nature-Nurture Binary

This session explores the nature-nurture debate through Adlerian psychology, challenging traditional dichotomies by emphasizing the dynamic interplay between genetics and environment. Drawing on behavioral genetics and epigenetics, it demonstrates how innate predispositions interact with social context to shape development. Key Adlerian concepts such as inferiority, striving for superiority, and social interest illustrate how individuals actively interpret and navigate these influences. The discussion bridges theory and research, offering a holistic framework for understanding human agency, resilience, and growth. Practical implications for psychology and education are also addressed.

When Zero Tolerance for Violence in Healthcare Impacts Child Life Services

Child life specialists play a crucial role in zero tolerance for violence in healthcare settings by focusing on creating a safe and supportive environment for children and families. We do this by prioritizing emotional safety (Gordon, 2021), by promoting positive coping skills, advocating for patient needs, collaborating with interdisciplinary team members, protecting vulnerable individuals, educating and supporting families, creating a safe and welcoming environment, providing emotional support, ensuring children have a voice, and by incorporating therapeutic play into our patients' care. However, what happens when, despite these efforts and our work, there are interactions in which there is an increased risk of violence and potential physical harm for the child life professional? What happens when we are working with a patient and there becomes a legitimate concern for physical safety? There are strategies that we can employ to decrease risk and to proactively protect ourselves. This presentation will examine this issue, and these strategies, through exploring case examples and relevant research.



SATURDAY, 10/4

Time reflects Eastern Standard Time (EST)

7:30-9:00 AM: Check-in

8:30-9:45 AM: Welcome to Conference!

Trip down Memory Lane (Emma Plank & GLACLP) &
ACLP Rep

Join us for a celebration of GLACLP becoming an organization 15 years ago along with celebrating the legacy of our very own Emma Plank, and the groundbreaking work she did to start the first university affiliated child life and education program 70 years ago at what is now MetroHealth Medical Center!

We will be welcoming all of our professionals, educators, students and more to the 2025 GLACLP Annual Child Life Conference by working together towards painting a beautiful mural donated by Splashes of Hope.

We have a track tailored specifically for our students & many speakers with different backgrounds excited to speak to all of our attendees; along with members of the ACLP Executive Board to join us for a day of growing and learning!



SATURDAY, 10/4

Time reflects Eastern Standard Time (EST)

9:45 AM: Break

10:00-11:30 AM: SESSION ONE (Choose 1)

From Trauma to Triumph: How Child Life Specialists Heal and Empower in Child Advocacy Centers

Target Population: Professionals, Students or Educators

(1.5 PDU, Assessment or Intervention)

Breanna Cowell, MA, CCLS & Katie Walker, PhD, CCLS

As child life continues expanding beyond hospital walls, community-based settings like Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) offer new opportunities for impactful practice. This session presents a comparative case study examining the role of child life specialists in a CAC, highlighting transferable skills, shared practices, and the positive impact on children and families. Participants will gain insight into how child life services enhance trauma-informed care in community-based environments.

Holding Up the Unsung Heroes: The Healthy Sibling

(1.5 PDU, Assessment or Intervention)

Target population: All

Jeannine Brown, MS Ed., CCLS II

This presentation will examine the powerful relationship between chronically ill and healthy siblings within a family unit. This conversation will focus on the long-term implications affecting the healthy sibling while emphasizing the importance of a family centered care model. Finally, it will explore strategies and resources to empower healthy siblings' families while developing coping tools to strengthen the relationships within the family.



SATURDAY, 10/4

Time reflects Eastern Standard Time (EST)

Extending Psychosocial Support Beyond the Hospital: Lessons from Community-Based Mental Health Interventions

Target population: Professionals or Leaders

(1.5 PDU, Assessment, Intervention, DEI, or Prof. Resp.)

Kylee McGrane-Zarnoch, BA

With pediatric mental health needs at an all-time high, but resources stretched thin, child life professionals are being called to think creatively and reimagine how psychosocial care can create meaningful impact. This dynamic session will challenge and inspire participants to think bigger, exploring innovative, community-driven approaches that embed child life values into school settings, community spaces, and family homes. Leave with actionable ideas, fresh frameworks, and creative strategies to transform care for children wherever they are, ensuring healing, hope, and support extend far beyond the hospital.

Inspiration from the Field - Student Q & A Panel (Not Recorded)

Target population: Students

An exemplary panel representing the ACLP, different hospitals, community organizations, and universities within our region will provide insight into relevant and trending student topics. Bring your questions!



SATURDAY, 10/4

Time reflects Eastern Standard Time (EST)

11:30-12:45 PM: Lunch & Networking Tables

12:45-1:45 PM: SESSION TWO (Choose 1)

Small Patients, Big Relief: Why Topical Numbing Matters in the ED

Target population: All

(1.0 PDU, Prof. Resp. Or Intervention)

Laura Nestor, BA, CCLS & Haley Bajdas, PharmD, BCEMP

In this presentation, we will explore the process of advocating with interdisciplinary staff members of an emergency department at a level one trauma center for the increased ordering and use of topical numbing agents prior to needlesticks for pediatric patients under the age of twelve. Though not all pediatric patients are viable candidates for topical numbing agents due to acuity of care, severity of medical circumstances, age, or sensory concerns, there were many pediatric patients that were candidates that were not receiving this pharmacological intervention that could increase emotional safety and promote atraumatic care. A pre/post retrospective chart review was performed to evaluate the effects of child life specialist advocacy, education, and intervention on the effects of ordering and administration patterns of topical anesthetics in the emergency department. Preliminary results demonstrate a statistically significant increase in the ordering and use of topical numbing agents for pediatric patients under the age of twelve seen in the emergency department during the post-intervention period.



SATURDAY, 10/4

Time reflects Eastern Standard Time (EST)

Enhancing Appointment Preparedness: The Role of Pre-Visit Phone Assessments & Tours

Target population: Professionals, Students or Leaders

(1.0 PDU, Assessment or Intervention)

Emma Hall, MS, CCLS & Kelsey Gregorgio, MS, CCLS

The presentation will begin with an introduction emphasizing the importance of assessment, specific to their respective outpatient settings. It focuses on pre-appointment assessments, outlining the criteria for contacting patients in advance and the essential information gathered, along with examples of effective phone scripting. Standardized preparation resources provided to caregivers are provided to participants during the presentation, promoting convenience through comprehensive follow-up emails containing preparation materials (videos/books), numbing cream handouts, images, scheduling details, and parking instructions. Additionally, information regarding pre-surgery tours will be provided. According to Liddle et al. (2020), interventions developed prior to healthcare experiences, such as picture or visual schedules, coping kits (i.e., includes communication aids, preparation books, distraction items) can assist children with developmental disabilities reduce the distress associated with their healthcare experience. Care coordination is highlighted as a crucial component of the patient experience, emphasizing the sharing of gathered information with interdisciplinary team members and preparing outpatient environments in order to normalize spaces and remove potential triggers before patients arrive. The presenters regularly advocate for institutional improvements across various fronts, including call center practices, in-basket (via EPIC) referrals to their team, proactive completion of comfort plans, and modifying provider processes in MRI and preoperative settings to minimize sedation and premedication needed. In addition to the tangible resources that will be provided, anecdotal experiences and feedback from patients and families will be shared throughout the presentation to model practical applications. The presentation will conclude with a focus on areas for growth and expansion, particularly efforts to integrate preparation resources seamlessly through the patient portal.



SATURDAY, 10/4

Time reflects Eastern Standard Time (EST)

How Are You Holding Up?": Assessing Parental Anxiety in Pediatric Surgery Cases

Target population: Professionals or Students

(1.0 PDU, Assessment)

Bridgette Danielson, MA, CCLS, CPST & Jasmine Ybarra, MA, CCLS
Surgery can lead to feelings of anxiety in pediatric patients, but what about their parents and guardians? Of all family variables, parental anxiety is most positively correlated with children's adverse responses during hospitalization. Therefore, parental anxiety represents an important target for interventions aimed at alleviating a child's anxiety. This presentation will explore how child life specialists assess parental anxiety and its impact on pediatric coping during the surgical experience.

Work or Play? (Not Recorded)

Target population: Students

What exactly is medical play? Is it structured or unstructured? Is it to prepare or debrief? Is it to express oneself or to learn?

This HANDS-ON session will sort it all out for you.

YOU SAY...ESSAY? Writing a Compelling Essay (Not Recorded)

Target population: Students

One of the most scrutinized sections of the ACLP Common Application is the ESSAY portion. Learn what reviewers look for in your written work.



SATURDAY, 10/4

Time reflects Eastern Standard Time (EST)

1:45-2:00 PM: Break

2:00-3:00PM: SESSION THREE (Choose 1)

From Bedside to Backpack and Beyond: Seamless Transitions for Chronically Ill Children Through Collaboration and Communication

Target Population: All

(1.0 PDU, Intervention or Prof. Resp)

Hannah Williams, MA, Senior CCLS

This presentation introduces a Certified Child Life Specialist-led program designed to support children with chronic illnesses transitioning from hospital to school while receiving home medication infusions. By normalizing medical equipment, providing customizable "coping cards," and facilitating collaboration between healthcare and school staff, the program empowers patients and promotes smoother reintegration into academic and social environments. The adaptable framework enhances communication, encourages self-advocacy, and improves coping strategies across settings lacking pediatric psychosocial support.



SATURDAY, 10/4

Time reflects Eastern Standard Time (EST)

Beyond the Moment of Loss: Navigating Grief's Ripple Effects in Pediatric Palliative Care

Target population: Professionals or Educators

(1.0 PDU, Assessment, Intervention, OR Prof. Resp.)

Mallory Rose, BS, CCLS & Karlie Colosimo, LMSW

Grief in pediatric palliative care is not confined to the moment of a child's death. Whether you support children and families in a hospital room, at bedside during end-of-life, or continue care in the community, understanding the ripple effects of loss is critical to providing meaningful psychosocial care. This session will guide participants through the often invisible and long-lasting layers of grief that families experience after a child dies. We'll address how grief intersects with identity loss (e.g., the end of the caregiver role), disruption of established care systems (e.g., cessation of hospital visits, therapies, or financial supports like SSI), and the emotional impact of everyday reminders (e.g., unopened medical deliveries, holidays, or empty car seats). We will examine how grief is not a singular event but a series of unfolding experiences that affect the whole family system. Through clinical cases, we will examine how anticipatory grief and post-death grief unfold over time, and how our roles as child life specialists and social workers can bridge those moments before and beyond the child's death.

We will integrate developmental theory (Erikson's stages, Piagetian constructs) and trauma-informed bereavement support to explore how grief manifests across different developmental stages and family systems. This session will highlight collaborative, family-centered approaches that honor the complexity of anticipatory grief, legacy building, and post-death adjustment. Erikson's psychosocial stages and Piaget's cognitive developmental theory, we will illustrate how grief is understood and expressed differently across developmental levels—from early childhood to adolescence. Informed by trauma theory, we will explore how sudden, anticipated, and complicated losses impact the child's neurobiological and emotional functioning, and how their grief responses are mediated by caregivers, medical teams, and psychosocial support systems.

Attendees will leave with transferable skills for both hospital and community settings. This session will equip child life specialists, social workers, and interdisciplinary pediatric palliative care professionals with practical strategies to support children and families' evolving grief.



SATURDAY, 10/4

Time reflects Eastern Standard Time (EST)

Climbing the Clinical Ladder to Career Advancement: Creating a Child Life Clinical Ladder

Target population: Professionals, Leaders, or Educators

(1.0 PDU, Prof. Resp.)

Katie Fleck, MS, CCLS

Jaclyn Kickel, CCLS

This presentation outlines the process of creating a clinical ladder for Certified Child Life Specialists (CCLSs) in collaboration with clinical and organizational leadership. It was created utilizing existing child life, nursing, and other healthcare professional career ladders. The framework fosters professional growth, recognizes clinical expertise, and supports leadership development in alignment with the Association of Child Life Professionals' (ACLP) standards and competencies. The structured advancement model aims to guide and recognize career progression within the child life department, addressing the ongoing demand for professional development opportunities. The requirements and application process will be explored as well as the three levels of advancement within the model including Competent (Level 1), Proficient (Level 2), and Expert (Level 3). Further components will be described including evaluations, reflective narratives, projects, and evidence of leadership, research, and competencies in alignment with ACLP clinical standards. The positive impact this model has had and any challenges to the process will be discussed. This advancement model serves as a replicable framework for other institutions aiming to achieve high-performing and engaged child life teams through a clinical ladder.



SATURDAY, 10/4

Time reflects Eastern Standard Time (EST)

Interviewing 101 (Not Recorded)

Target population: Students

What questions are you likely to be asked when you get the interview you've been hoping for? This session offers participants real-time practice in creating meaningful dialogue that truly shows your knowledge, skills, and abilities. Reminders of interview etiquette will be highlighted as well.

How Much? How Many? What kind? (Not Recorded)

Target population: Students

Is a practicum still needed? What PRE-INTERNSHIP experiences will help you secure the internship you desire? Thoughts, professional advice, and options on how to best navigate your time and energy will be shared!

3:00-3:15 PM: Break

3:15-4:15 PM: Plenary (Not Recorded)

Frustration or Fulfillment: Reclaiming Meaning in the work of Child Life


(1.0 PDU, Prof. Resp.)

Devra B. Adelstein, LISW-S

In countless conversations with child life specialists, I've been moved by the clarity, humor and heart you bring to some of life's hardest moments. This talk is a reflection of what I've learned from you: that the child life profession, while often underestimated, is a quiet powerhouse of healing and hope. By revisiting your stories, we'll rediscover the deep impact of what you make possible, and recognize the extraordinary power tucked inside the everyday.

4:15 PM: Closing Remarks

4:30 PM: Optional Tour of MetroHealth Medical Center



MORE INFO!

Dress Code

Please feel free to wear your new GLACLP T-shirt or business casual!

Lodging Information

The Holiday Inn Cleveland South

6001 Rockside Rd.
Independence, Ohio 44131
216-524-8050

Room Block available until Sept. 15, 2025

\$119.00/night

[Click HERE for blocked room booking rate!](#)



Questions or
Comments?
Email us!

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