



Annual Impact Report

Child Life Program

April 1, 2023- March 31, 2024

Stollery Children's Hospital



**Alberta Health
Services**

Child Life Services



STOLLERY
CHILDREN'S
HOSPITAL

Message from AHS Leadership

Child Life is an essential program at the Stollery Children's Hospital. The work of the team is amazing and improves the care and experience for patients and families. The Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation and Alberta Health Services provides financial support for the Child Life Program. All the support provided, we are so grateful.

Rhonda Tomlinson, RN BScN

Manager for Child Life Program, Awasisak Indigenous Health Program, Patient Family Centered Care

Judy Dahl, CCLS

Acting Team Lead for Child Life Program



Child Life Services

2 Music
Therapists

Certified Child Life Specialists (CCLS) undergo rigorous education and clinical training to specialize in reducing trauma and understanding the developmental effects of illness and injury. They play a vital role in enhancing the care, satisfaction, and overall experience of patients and families.

By offering evidence-based interventions such as therapeutic play, procedure preparation, and education, they assist infants, children, youth, and families in coping with the stress and uncertainty associated with various health challenges, including acute and chronic illness, injury, trauma, disability, loss, and bereavement.

27
Child Life
Specialists



1 Administrative
Assistant
2 Service
Workers

1 Art
Therapist



virtual community role
 saville family beach
 pet therapy program
 music therapy program
 mental health role
 sibling support box
 coping clinics program
 art therapy program
 child life specialist
 complex therapy role



Supported Children

"We saw a 12-year-old boy with autism in clinic for a physical abuse assessment. We could not have completed our assessment without the Child Life Specialist's amazing skills and expertise."

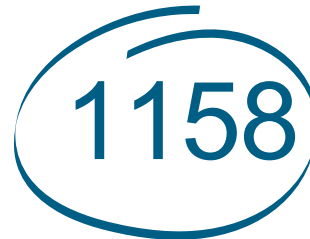
"It was such a delight to see how well our patient responded to music and the important work of child life."

*Celeste Denney, RN, MN
Clinical Nurse Specialist
Child & Adolescent Protective Services*



Pet Visitation

per year



Music Therapy - Inpatients

per year



Community Outreach

per year

Projects

Details

Outcome

Patient/Family Support and Education

Establishing excellence & supporting evidence-based practice

9000+

(Average) Patient & family interactions annually receiving excellent evidence-based practice by Child Life discipline

Mental Health

Designated pyscosocial support for child and adolescents

259

Patients supported

Group Programming

Opportunities for play and normalization of the hospital experience

8400+

Average patient and sibling group program participants per year.

Interdisciplinary Testimonials

“The life saving power of Child Life's work became so clear to me on the occasions where they were able to support critically ill patients through invasive procedures, which successfully spared the patients a sedation that could have been lethal in their precarious state. But beyond procedural support, our Child Life team provides indispensable expertise in truly seeing our patients for who they are and fiercely advocating for their needs to be met and their voice to be heard.”

*Kairos Lik Hai Wong, Nurse Practitioner
Paediatric Oncology, Hematology, Immunology*



“It can not be overstated how vital the Pediatric Oncology Child Life team is to the holistic health of children receiving cancer therapy at the Stollery. Our CCLS have been able to empower patients and their parents to manage invasive and sometimes uncomfortable procedures, as well as to assist nursing staff, to reduce the distress associated with these essential tasks. Additionally, once their therapies are complete, patients who have been supported by Child Life have now gained coping skills to use in any aspect of their lives moving forward. Stephanie and Christina play an essential role in supporting the physical, emotional and psychological resilience of our patients and their families and we could not do our job without them!”

*Ashley Stammers, NP & Karina Black, NP
Paediatric Oncology, Hematology, Immunology*

The Saville Family Beach Group Programming

The Child Life team implements group programming for Stollery patients, their siblings, and families. This programming comprises therapeutic, child-led play sessions and special events aimed at fostering a sense of normalcy within the hospital environment, promoting socialization, and encouraging positive interactions.

Group programs in hospitals offer young patients and their families a sense of empowerment and control, supporting an environment where they can experience their childhood amidst hospitalization while reducing the fear and anxiety often associated with such stays.

700+

Average patient and sibling group program participants per month.

“Throughout the 2023-2024 period, group programs predominantly took place in specific unit playrooms within the hospital due to ongoing renovations at the Saville Family Beach. In March 2024, the Child Life team commenced group programming and special events at the renovated Saville Family Beach. The utilization of this indoor space has significantly broadened the reach of group programs, enabling a larger number of patients and families to partake in these activities. This expansion has fostered enhanced coping with hospitalization and created opportunities for the formation of positive and lasting memories.”

Jessie Nicholls, MA, CCLS



“The Beach is so bright and welcoming. It is making our time here at the hospital much more fun! It is amazing to see my child smile as they play.” Stollery
-Parent

“I want to come to the Beach every day!”
-Stollery Patient

“The Beach is a place where I can come to play, do crafts and meet new friends. The Beach is the best!”
- Stollery Patient

The Saville Family Beach

Opening soon, Summer 2024!



"The outdoor play space will offer immense benefits for the patients and families at the Stollery. Research has proven time and time again that opportunities for meaningful play make a significant impact on a child's ability to cope with a stressful experience. There can only be added benefit when some of this play takes place outdoors. Not to mention, some of these patients spend weeks to months admitted to hospital. Having access to an inclusive, outdoor play space within the hospital gives them healing opportunities they may not otherwise have. Young patients will have the ability to strengthen their bodies and their minds in a playful way. The families and caregivers benefit immensely as well when they have the opportunity to interact with their child in the very normal, everyday parenting task of going to the playground. Playing together outdoors means families get to come together, siblings feel included and valued, and patients create positive memories within an otherwise stressful healthcare system."

Courtney Parsons, BA, CCLS

April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024

Stollery Children's Hospital

Mental Health

In alignment with the Foundation's commitment to closing the gaps in mental health care, a Child Life Specialist position was created to provide much needed psychosocial and emotional support for these patients. Since the founding of this position in December of 2022, over 250 patients have been seen and supported.

Typically, this Child Life Specialist will support patients with one or more of the following: overdose ingestion, non-fatal suicide attempt, situational crisis, suicidal ideation, self-harm/self-injury, substance use/misuse, acute eating disorder. Child life effectively meets the patients and families where they are at emotionally and physically and assists in promoting coping throughout hospitalization.

"So amazing! She knows how to meet patients exactly where they are at. She is so great at connecting with them and supporting them in creative ways."

Mental Health Team Member



Summary

April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024

259

Patients seen

208

Patients in 2023

51

Patients in 2024

Pet Visitation

Annual Patient and
family bedside pet visits

430

The Stollery pet visitation program is comprised of volunteer handler & dog pairs who provide opportunities for bedside visits for patients and their families during a hospital admission.

This program has a big impact on the coping for patients and families at the Stollery. It supports the Child Life team in achieving their objectives of minimizing anxiety and trauma within the medical environment. The team is enthusiastic about further developing this program and aims to introduce a facility dog at the Stollery in the future to enhance opportunities for animal-assisted therapies.

"I have really been missing my dog back home and seeing, petting and giving treats to Olive has made my day so much better"
- Stollery Patient

"My daughter has not smiled as big as she did when the dog came to her room since before her surgery. We are so thankful for these opportunities."
- Stollery Parent

"I love feeling the dogs' soft fur and having them lay beside me. It really helps me feel calm."
- Stollery Patient

Stollery Pet Visitation Pups



OLIVE & Stollery Patient



ROSIE & Stollery Patient



ZOE & Princesses

Art Therapy

WHAT ART THERAPY CAN OFFER

Through the process of partnering with the creative process and the supportive therapeutic presence of the Art Therapist, one can:

- Express feelings, connect to inner and outer resources, and improve coping
- Use symbolism and metaphor to express oneself in ways words can't
- Find a safe place to process overwhelming and traumatic experiences
- Decrease stress and anxiety
- Make creative choices to gain a sense of control.

WHAT HAPPENS IN AN ART THERAPY SESSION

Art Therapy sessions happen one-on-one in a patient's room at the bedside.

Engagement is led by the child, and their curiosity and interest, though the art therapist may invite certain materials to support particular goals.

Sessions range from 30 to 90 minutes, depending on a child's age. Emphasis is not on the end product but on the creative process and the feelings, thoughts, and meaning that the process brings life to the child.

Art therapy encourages imagination and curiosity through, expression, exploration, experimentation, and structured mess-making, all within the safe container of the creative process and a therapeutic relationship.



Music Therapy

In the Emergency Department

382

Patients supported
since January 2024 to
March 31, 2024

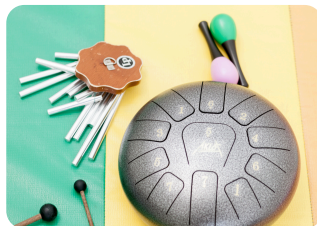
Having a Music Therapist dedicated to the Emergency Department (ED) is the first role of its kind in Canada! Music therapy in the ED supports patients through managing their pain, reducing anxiety and stress, and providing support during procedures. Sessions occur in patient rooms as well as the waiting room.

The Music Therapist works alongside Child Life Specialists to provide a variety of supports for children during their stay at the Stollery.

Adriana Jankovic, MTA, MMT, MMus



ED Music Therapy had an opportunity to present at the Pediatric Emergency Medicine Rounds. It was a great opportunity to collaborate, discuss, and share experiences on how this role can positively impact patients and families within the emergency department setting.



Exploring the Role of Music Therapy in Pediatric Emergency Medicine



Presented by:
Adriana Jankovic, MTA, MMT, MMus
Stollery Children's Hospital, Emergency
Department
March 14, 2024

EDUCATOR

The Child Life Educator position is the first role of its kind in Canada!

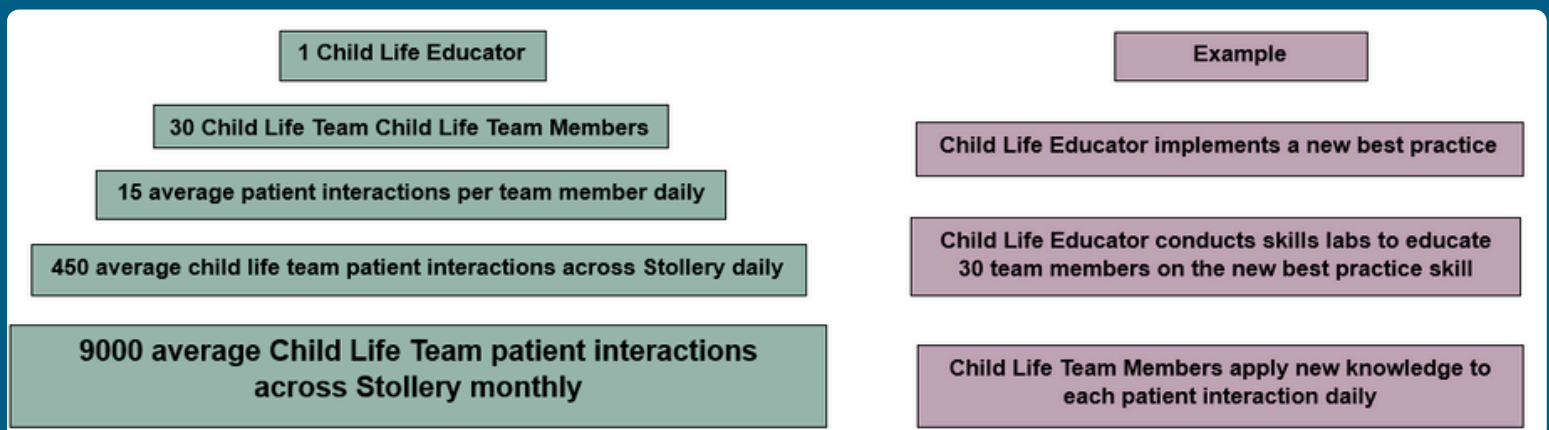
Supporting and achieving EXCELLENCE!

“The role of an educator supported an effective on-boarding process. Through orientation which I heard, myself and the other new staff have been the first ones to be offered a full orientation. I think successful onboarding made me comfortable to begin the role. During one of the sessions, Alison in her new role as the educator had the chance to present to other new hires what the child life discipline was about.”

Pearl

“This position is instrumental in providing support for our internship program. Alison has had the time to look at our application processes and interview questions and make some changes in keeping up with the standards of our governing body the ACLP. The goal is always that our interns will become future employees.”

Angela Mark



Community Outreach & Clinical Virtual Program

The purpose of the program is to provide psychosocial care for children and families in the community.

Community: Children and their families that accessing services in areas such as, homecare, public health, and referrals that do not have Child Life Specialist part of their care team.

Outreach: Actively providing services to professional services to any population that might not otherwise have access to those services.



Community Outreach Interventions

- Creating individualized Adaptive Care Plans for community referrals. Supporting patients with past hospital trauma and neurodivergent needs that visit the Stollery for outpatient clinics, blood work, and surgeries.
- Edmonton Zone Public Health – Millwoods Public Health. Completion of two immunization coping clinic at Ekota and Blessed John Paul school for grade six students.
- Supporting palliative patients, siblings, and families continuing care in their home in memory making activities with ASSIST team.
- Developing coping plans for transition from inpatient to home with Homecare team.
- Stollery Coping Clinic

Clinical Virtual Interventions

- Online coping sessions with patients needing support prior to their outpatient clinic, blood work, and surgery appointments.
- Online coping clinics sessions for parents.
- Creation of online resources for procedural preparation and information.

"You changed a little boys life today, with just a few simple hours of your time. THANK YOU for being you!"

Nash had nothing but positive light to share with his family, all day and night. You made such a difference, it brings tears to my eyes quite literally how different today was in comparison to others. So again, thank you. "

-Stollery Parent



Community Outreach & Clinical Virtual Program

Testimonials

"Childlife Services to the Stollery Hospital has been an integral part regarding the support, expertise, and connections to families who struggle in coming to grips with a variety of stressors associated with their child with medical needs. Often times, when informed about the medical, emotional, and social challenges that children will have to face, parents are often more impacted emotionally than their children. In my experience working with Child life Specialist Karen Shin, whose responsibilities are to accept referrals from the outside community, has played a vital role in providing education, compassion, and support to not only my patient, but also more importantly establishing a sense of empathy and resilience in the child and the parents. She gave them a sense of hope and direction when the felt lost in the medical field which can often be chaotic. Hope to utilize Child life service in the future as they provided a significant resource and support in my treatment of children with complex medical needs."

-Thomas Changarathil MA R. Psych(AB)

"We work with Karen often, seeing kids from the community that require extra support and care. Karen has the ability to communicate with the families in a way that helps ease their fears and concerns before and during their visit. She creates a thorough and appropriate care plan with the families which prepares us to provide the best level of care. We have witnessed that Karen shows a great deal of understanding and patience with each and every child. It is a great privilege to be working with Karen on a frequent basis and witnessing the changes this is making in the families' medical journey."

-Michelle & Vanessa

"The services provided by Child Life, specifically Karen Shin, has been truly remarkable. Her dedication is extraordinary, helping Noah deal with his trauma, anxiety, and fear of undergoing recurring bloodwork, requested of his Hematologist. She is compassionate and able to tailor coping resolutions to Noah's interests thereby alleviating him of the anxiety and trauma in a short amount of time. As a parent, knowing that Noah and I have the support and that his mental health and emotional well-being is in capable hands, is assuring and comforting during these appointments. I am deeply grateful for Karen, her support and guidance has made a significant difference in our journey."

-Stollery Parent

Children of Adult Patients

Children of adults at end of life are often referred to as the forgotten mourners. Death is universal, but children experience it differently than adults do. The hospital can be a scary place, with unfamiliar people and equipment. If not appropriately supported, children may develop significant cognitive and emotional responses. Adult caregivers and healthcare professionals report feeling ill-equipped when it comes to supporting children of adult patients. Child Life Specialists have been able to bridge this gap for the past 3 1/2 years and hope to continue supporting this population.

Interventions offered

100+



Preparation: for the first ICU visit or to say goodbye to their loved on (virtually or in person).

Parental education: giving parents tips on how to start the conversation about death, or explaining death to the child in developmentally appropriate terms, at parents' request.

Supportive session: assessing the child's needs and understanding, and then offering opportunities for therapeutic and self-expressive activities, teaching positive coping strategies

Memory making activities: bringing in resources we use in pediatrics, as well as developing new and creative ways to facilitate current and future coping.



Exceptional & Growing Program

Heartbeat Bears


Three years ago, when this Child Life Specialist position was created for **children of adult patients** at end of life, the child life specialist had the privilege of supporting an adult burn patient. This patient had severe burns all over his body, including his hands and feet. In determining what kind of legacy item could be done for his son, the idea of recording his heartbeat was brought to the nurse, who agreed to facilitate this request. The child life specialist took this recording and put it into a bear.

This patient's mom was quite emotional when she received this 'heartbeat bear' that upon the patient's passing, she provided 20 bears and 20 recorders to the child life specialist, stating "I want to make sure every child has the same opportunity that you gave my grandson". This patient's family was instrumental in starting the 'heartbeat bear' program and continues to send the child life specialist donations to this day.

Several months later, the Child Life Specialist was able to offer another family a 'heartbeat bear' and this time, the nurse said she was so touched that she wanted to do a fundraiser to help keep the program going. This contribution has further allowed the entire child life team to offer this special gift, to both our children of adult patients AND pediatric families now.

Thanks to these generous donations, the child life team has been able to provide families with a special gift that they would not otherwise have the opportunity to receive., and we hope to be able to continue on with this program.

Ashley, CCLS



"Thank you so much we received the bears today and the girls are so happy for the first time in a week. We are forever grateful."

-Adult Patient's family

"It's so so special to us and the kids love it."

-Adult Patient's family

"Thank you, my child, has not let go of that bear."

-Adult Patient's family

Bringing the Magic to Stollery!



April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024

Stollery Children's Hospital



Complex Care

To support the unique needs of children and their families experiencing chronic hospitalization through developmentally appropriate play, procedural support, bonding and normalization.



“As a pediatric Medicine Manager, I have had the privilege of working closely with Abby , Our Child Life Complex Care Coordinator. Abby’s dedication to our youngest patients is unparalleled. Her expertise in navigating complex medical situations while ensuring children feel safe and supported is truly remarkable. She seamlessly integrates play, education, and emotional support into our care plans and makes a challenging journey a little easier for our patients and their family. Abby’s commitment to each child significantly enhances our team. She is an invaluable asset to our team.”

Rehana Devji -Unit Manager 4E4

Summary

January 1, 2024, to March 31, 2024

15
Patients

Inpatients sessions

142

Complex Care

Nathan's Hospital Graduation Story



"The graduation had a positive impact on our family, especially for me and my husband. We had a long journey with Nathan at the hospital and it was not a smooth journey so the graduation in a way had a symbolic meaning to us that even though there were hard times, eventually something good will come out of the situation. Nathan might not remember it, but once he understands, I will tell him about his hospital journey and his graduation. I know that not everyone's journey in the hospital is the same but I also wanted Nathan's and our journey give hope and serve as an inspiration to the families at the Stollery." - Kristina





Dreams for the FUTURE



Dedicated position for Pediatric Burns Program

This position would follow pediatric burn patients throughout their hospital experience. This would include inpatient admissions, the Acute Burn Clinic, and the Burn Follow Up Clinic. The Burn Program cares for patients from all over Alberta, Northern BC, Yukon, NWT, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

2022 Statistics

- 38 Pediatric Burn Patient Admissions
- Total admission days to hospital for Pediatric Burn Patients is 729.

2023 Statistics:

- 634 Pediatric appointments in the Acute Burn Clinic

Child Life Supports Include

- Procedural Preparation & support including building coping plans for dressing changes and other medical interventions
- Pain Management Strategies
- Play for normalization of hospital environment and memories of pain
- Body image processing, coping with changes in body appearance and lifestyle including feelings of grief and loss associated with body image
- Trauma processing from burn event
- Creation of age-appropriate resources for education and processing of hospitalization
- Resiliency support- community connections and long term supports
- Milestone recognition and documentation
- Medical Goal Support- dietary, physiotherapy/occupational therapy
- School reintegration
- Ongoing laser and reconstruction therapy throughout childhood



Dedicated position for Royal Alexandra NICU

This position would be located at the Royal Alexandra Hospital which sees over 1100 admissions a year. This site is the largest NICU in Alberta and serves Alberta residents from Red Deer to northern Alberta, NWT, and Yukon. The RAH site cares for critically ill infants and specializes in the care of very premature infants requiring months in hospital.

Child Life Supports Include

- Procedural support for comfort
- Pain Management Strategies
- Developmental Play & Positive Touch
- Memory making
- Addressing sensory needs
- Emotional support for patients and families
- Education & resources for families including sibling support
- Promote creative ways for patients and family to bond
- Educate on neonatal developmental cues, comfort holds and coping skills
- Sibling preparation and supports for hospital visits
- Developmentally appropriate education for siblings on medical explanations
- Therapeutic play activities to support sibling understanding and coping
- Facilitating and empowering caregivers in adapting to their new role in parents including adolescent parents.

Dreams for the FUTURE

While an MRI exam is extremely important in caring for patients, there can be some challenges to patient comfort and emotional stability. The imaging can take up to sixty minutes or more to complete. This means asking children to remain still throughout the scan, which is often difficult and uncomfortable, given the surroundings.

Since the child life position in MRI was created three years ago, they have experienced a high success rate of children completing their scans awake.

This is due to the services that child life offers:

- Providing parents with strategies to practice at home
- Developmentally appropriate resources for preparation (including videos, images, and sensory information)
- Rehearsal with the Child Life Specialist so that the child knows what to expect and how to hold their body 'still'
- Individualized coping strategies for during the MRI

Child life believes creating a more pediatric friendly environment (including VR Cinemavision goggles and a pediatric-friendly MRI suite) will further support the ultimate goal of developing a pediatric MRI Non-Sedation Program.



Summary Stats 2021-2023

98

Attempts

93

Successful, non-sedated MRI's completed

5

Unsuccessful

Dreams for the FUTURE

Pediatric Nephrology & Dialysis

Children receiving hemodialysis have treatment 3-4 times a week for approximately 4 hours each time. They receive this care within a hospital unit designed for adult patients.

Child Life Supports Include

- Diagnosis education & understanding of medical story through creative therapeutic activities.
- Treatment preparation
- Procedural support & building coping plans
- Coping with changes in body appearance and lifestyle
- Support with milestones (birthdays) and transitions (transplants, routines)
- Creation of age-appropriate resources
- Creation of a "Kids Zone" to include toys and activities for play during treatment

Highlights

- Seeing staff unite and come together to celebrate patient milestones.
- Seeing patients play games together, which supported positive encounters, build a sense of community and peer relationships
- Children developing positive coping skills while receiving dialysis treatment.

Future Goals

- Child Life to attend transplant rounds.
- To participate in kidney transplant work up
- To follow patients in Nephrology clinic as needed
- Partnership with unit educator on dialysis unit nurses' development education on child development, coping strategies, and increased understanding of child life role.

Summary Stats 2024

January - End of March

26

Patients

Inpatients & Dialysis

72

In-Patients sessions in 2024

49+

Dialysis patient sessions

Dreams for the FUTURE

Pediatric Nephrology & Dialysis

"I am the parent of a child who is in renal failure and on hemodialysis on unit 5B1, an adult unit that hosts pediatric patients. For the past three years, my son has spent about 12 hours per week in the hospital receiving life-sustaining treatment. He has had more hospital experiences than we can count ranging from clinic visits to ER visits, admissions, PICU admissions, tests, scans, consultations, resuscitation, surgeries and emergency surgeries. All of these add up to medical trauma, a sense of loss and a need to reckon with the fact that he is different from his peers at school. It hasn't been all that long that he has been receiving the gift of Child Life Services on the dialysis unit but already I have noticed a change in his willingness to leave school and come to dialysis, as well as in his ability to cope during his treatment. He is also more settled when we arrive back home after treatment than he was previously. He looks forward to his visits from his Child Life Specialist and now has a shelf of child-friendly activities to choose from when she isn't there. Jacey has been working on programming for him that we hope will help him come to understand what he has been through and answer questions he has about his medical situation, with the goal of working through some of the trauma he has. This support has meant a lot to me as a parent. I had felt alone and frustrated in helping my son cope with all that he's been through and is still going through and I now have experienced support. I also have someone who can act as a liaison between my son/myself and the medical team with the goal of meeting his emotional needs and his needs for play and normalcy as a child. I am so appreciative that Child Life Support has been granted to my son and the other children receiving hemodialysis, it would crush us to see it end".

-Parent of 8 year old patient



We'd like to thank all of our donors
and the Stollery Children's Hospital
Foundation for their
generous support

