



Child Life at Children's Wisconsin

Wraparound care for kids and families

When a child is sick or injured, the whole family experiences distress and disruption. That's why **Child life and family services are an essential component of the Children's Wisconsin experience**, offering wraparound services and support to kids and families as they navigate their health care journey. We do this because we're a hospital and so much more, believing that caring for kids' health includes their physical, social and mental health.

Through programs and services that provide appropriate coping and play methods, we empower families to understand their treatment, plan their care and best partner with their health care teams. This approach is fundamental to our identity — a pediatric hospital and health care system focused 100 percent on kids and families. These programs and services are offered free to families because it's the right thing to do; however, many of them are not billable to insurance. Your support makes this work possible.

Delivering kid-centered care

Kids deserve the best, and Children's Wisconsin works to meet each child and family where they are, tailoring care to their unique needs in developmentally appropriate ways. This includes:



Child Life Specialists: Health care can be stressful, especially for kids who are in pain or need invasive treatments. Child Life specialists are members of the health care team: they help kids and families understand what is happening in the medical environment at a level they can comprehend through play, preparation, education, guided imagery and self-expression activities.



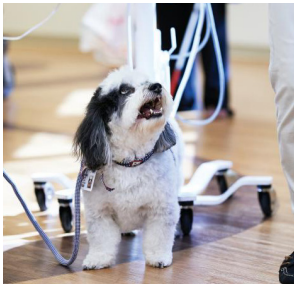
Kids and families who work with Child Life rate their Children's Wisconsin experience statistically higher than those who do not experience these services.



The Creative Arts: Kids experiencing hospital stays are often confronted with thoughts, emotions and fears that may be hard to communicate. Art and music therapists help kids manage their stress, foster self-awareness and cultivate emotional resilience through verbal and non-verbal expression. Children can more easily communicate their needs, desires and difficult or confusing emotions through songwriting, music improvisation or drawing. This allows them to exert control in a safe and healthy way, which is important in an environment where they otherwise don't have much choice or control.



Art therapy has been shown to reduce anxiety in kids in the hospital by as much as 33 percent — and has even shown a correlation to improved quality of life.



Therapy dogs: Therapy dogs provide comfort and positive distraction during stressful and unsettling times, reducing the anxiety kids and families experience during hospital stays. Dogs accept everyone, no matter their physical, emotional or mental challenges.



Children's Wisconsin has 23 therapy dogs who complete over 5,000 consults annually. These dogs help kids reduce stress and anxiety and improve their overall mood and social interaction.



The Playroom of Hope: Siblings of kids in the hospital often feel stressed and confused. In addition to worrying about whether their sibling will be okay, they can also feel overlooked. The Playroom of Hope at the Milwaukee hospital features toys, books and games for siblings, and there's a quiet room where they can meet one-on-one with specialists from the Child Life and Creative Arts programs.



Imagine the stress of a parent who has frequent appointments for a child with complex medical needs. Then, imagine the relief of having a safe, caring and creative place for their sibling, just down the hall, where they can play, express emotions and develop friendships. In 2023, the Playroom of Hope was open for over 1,150 hours.

How you can help

Children's Wisconsin talks to kids and families in ways they can understand and creates child-friendly environments that make everyone feel at ease. This work is critical to our mission and best positions kids to learn, grow and thrive. Programs and services such as Child Life, The Creative Arts, Dog Therapy and Sibling Care are offered free to families and depend on community investment to continue since they are not billable to insurance or fully funded by reimbursements. Your support makes this work possible.



To make a gift to Child Life and Family Services, please contact Kara Muchow, Senior Director of Development, at (920) 205-8717 or kmuchow@childrenswi.org.

Your support means the kids and families we serve can have brighter futures.