

Diane Morales, MS, CCLS II

BACHELORS IN FAMILY AND CHILD SCIENCES/SPANISH;
MASTERS IN DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES WITH A CONCENTRATION IN CHILD LIFE
5 YEARS EXPERIENCE

*“To have the desire means that you can; otherwise you wouldn’t have the desire”
-Candace Moore*

Can you tell me a little bit about your hospital and the units you cover?

I work at a freestanding children's hospital with 287 beds. Currently I provide services on all med/surg units with a colleague, which includes: inpatient surgery, respiratory, observation, and gastrointestinal/endocrinology/adolescent medicine. We have just rolled out a consult-based model last month!

What’s your typical unit census and about how many patients do you see per day?

Typically, I see between 8-10 consults a day.

What does your average day look like?

In the mornings, I assess to see what the highest needs are on the unit and work my way through the list. This can be anything from consults, to scheduled pre-surgical orientations, to helping host a teddy bear clinic, to even helping celebrate a patient's birthday. Shuffle in meetings, grand rounds, and a lunch break – my days are usually pretty busy! Every day is different, which is something I love about being a child life specialist.

What is your favorite distraction item and how do you use it?

My favorite distraction tool is bubbles. I love using it to guide patients in deep breathing exercises by asking them to blow big bubbles (making them take big, slow breaths) or little breaths (small, quick breaths).

What’s the best part about your job?

The best part about my job is making things less scary for kids and providing comfort in uncomfortable times. There is no better feeling in the world than to see a little warrior overcome their fears with you by their side coaching them.

What’s the hardest part in doing your job?

The hardest part about doing child life I would have to say is helping families through bereavements. This takes an emotional toll on everyone involved. However, in the end, it is truly a blessing to be able to be included in such a delicate time in these families' lives.

What’s a facet of your job that people wouldn’t expect?

I would say something people would not expect about child life is how often we, as child life specialists, have to advocate for ourselves/our services amongst the medical team. Many child life specialists that I know spend a lot of time doing in-services, creating services flyers, and requesting appropriate consults from members of the interdisciplinary team to promote our services.

What’s something you wish you knew when you started on this unit?

My first two years working as a CCLS, I worked in a pediatric emergency room. I always say the ER “raised” me as a CCLS. That being said, when I began to work on inpatient units, I realized how fast paced the ER truly is and how different the inpatient world is. It was (and still is, three years later) a big adjustment to learn to slow down and match the pace of my current unit.

Do you have anything else you’d like to share about your job, tips for students, or thoughts?

Just have fun and never forget why you're doing what you're doing – to make the hospital less scary for the kids!

