

**12:30pm to 2:00pm**

**2G**

**In person only**

**\*Comfort, Connection, and Care: Child Life Support During Palliative Care Across the Healthcare Setting**

*\*This session is approved for 1.5 SW CE credits*

This presentation will explore the essential role of Child Life Specialists in supporting patients and families navigating serious illness in both pediatric and adult healthcare environments. It will highlight how child life specialists provide developmentally appropriate education, coping support, legacy building, and grief-informed interventions throughout the palliative care journey.

Through clinical examples and practical strategies, we will examine how child life specialists foster communication, strengthen family connection, and create meaningful moments during complex medical experiences. The session will address supporting siblings, children of adult patients, and caregivers, emphasizing collaboration within interdisciplinary palliative care teams to promote family-centered care.

**Learning Objectives**

By the end of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- Describe the role of the Child Life Specialist within pediatric and adult palliative care settings.
- Identify developmentally appropriate interventions that promote coping, understanding, and connection during serious illness.
- Discuss strategies for legacy building, memory making, and grief support within palliative care.
- Recognize ways to support siblings and children of adult patients during a family member's serious illness.
- Apply practical approaches to enhance interdisciplinary collaboration and family-centered palliative care support.

**Bios:**

**Marianne Porzelt, MS, CCLS**, is a Certified Child Life Specialist with over a decade of experience supporting children and families navigating serious and complex medical

experiences. She currently serves on the CCMC adult palliative care committee member and works closely with patients and families within the Hematology and Oncology division.

In her current role, Marianne provides compassionate, developmentally appropriate support to children facing life-limiting and life-threatening illnesses. She partners closely with interdisciplinary teams to promote coping, facilitate understanding of medical experiences, support legacy building, and guide families through anticipatory grief and bereavement.

With a strong foundation in crisis intervention and trauma-informed care, Marianne is deeply committed to helping patients and families feel empowered, supported, and seen during some of their most vulnerable moments.

**Emily Altstadter**, MS, CCLS, is a Certified Child Life Specialist with over six years of experience, primarily serving patients and families in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit. Throughout her work in high-acuity settings, she has supported children and caregivers during some of their most critical and emotionally complex moments.

Emily has a strong clinical focus on palliative care, providing developmentally appropriate education, coping support, and guidance to patients, siblings, and caregivers. She has extensive experience in end-of-life care, including facilitating legacy-building activities, memory making, grief and bereavement support, and helping families create meaningful moments of connection during difficult times. Emily is committed to fostering family-centered care, to ensure that every member of the family feels supported, informed, and seen.