

CHILD LIFE SPECIALISTS IN A PEDIATRIC SURGICAL SETTING

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Background/Problem: Pediatric surgery is a stressful and emotional experience for both patients and family members.

Objective: To promote an interdisciplinary approach to achieving family-centered care through the creative implementation of a child life specialist program which mobilizes a certified expert resource to educate, support and interact with the patient and families during the preoperative and postoperative phases of surgery.

Implementation: The nurse plays a key role in identifying patients who would benefit from a child life specialist consultation, facilitation of the referral, relaying pertinent patient information and ensuring optimal outcomes. A child life specialist provides adjunctive support to the patient and family especially when limitations of time and/or lack of expertise in dealing with developmentally-delayed, extremely anxious and difficult patients present for surgery.

Successful Practice: This collaborative approach to family-centered care assists the team in achieving a high level of overall patient satisfaction.

Implications: Perianesthesia nursing collaborates with child life specialists to address the emotional needs of pediatric surgical patients and their families, and improve the surgical experience.