

Job Options after Completing the Human Development and Early Childhood Disorders (HDCD) Master's Program at The University of Texas at Dallas

Careers Include:

Early Intervention Specialists

In the past, most of our students pursued careers as Early Intervention Specialists (EIS) in Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) programs with this degree. Many students continue to work as EISs, and the options with a Masters in HDCD are expanding. More private clinics and agencies are recognizing the importance of the specialized training our students receive to assess and intervene with children and their families. Additionally, they are learning the importance of understanding a child's needs within the context of all areas of development (the whole child), which the HDCD program emphasizes and prepares students for.

Developmental Specialists

-Graduates from our program are beginning to work in private Occupational Therapy (OT) and Physical Therapy (PT) clinics as developmental specialists, or at Speech Language Pathology (SLP) clinics as a Speech Therapist's Assistant.

-A program for young children, the Infant-Child Comprehensive Assessment Program (ICCAP) -- which is part of the Momentous Institute -- has hired graduates of our program. The ICCAP serves a mostly Hispanic population, so a developmental specialist needs to be bilingual. This specialist is responsible for administering assessments and coordinating the clinicians involved in this program -- clinicians such as OTs, PTs, SLPs and Developmental Specialists.

-Students have been hired by Children's Medical Center Low Birth Weight Clinic where they work as developmental specialists, working with the children and their families to provide developmental assessments for the children and provide information and resources to the families. Some also have worked in the Low Birth Weight Clinic's research programs at UT Southwestern.

Child Life

Child Life in pediatric wings of hospitals is an option, but you will need to obtain a separate Child Life certification. Our degree definitely benefits you if pursuing this certification because our students develop a firm foundation in typical and atypical development. This foundation includes social-emotional concerns that are relevant to the stress felt by children and families when there is hospitalization and severe illnesses. It also includes the use of a variety of assessment tools and working with children and families in hospital settings. Students from the program have been hired to work in Child Life programs while they obtain their certification.

Other students create their own jobs or a special niche in existing agencies. Examples include:

Opening a private program to provide assessment and intervention services (both in the home and center-based) for children 18 months and older, through adulthood. The program provides a combination of ABA and DIR Floortime services for young children, and center-based social skills groups and tutoring for older children through adulthood.

Working in the Oklahoma KIDS' CareNet program. The program is designed to help children with severe emotional disturbances and their families obtain comprehensive care in their own community through the wraparound process. Wraparound is a planning process that follows a series of steps to help children, youth and families realize their hopes and dreams. A family team is formed with a care coordinator and a family support provider creates a plan that includes ways to ensure that the children and family experience success in their community, home and school. Family strengths and culture are used to meet family needs and goals. NorthCare provides these services to families in Oklahoma County through the Oklahoma Systems of Care contract with ODMHSAS.

One student was hired to work at Oak Hill Academy, a private school in Dallas for children with learning differences, providing developmental assessments for the young children served by the school. Prior to her position at Oak Hill Academy, this program graduate was employed in the newborn nursery at Parkland Hospital where she trained the nurses in developing less intrusive and less overwhelming procedures to improve the nurses' delivery of care with the newborns. This former student now has her own Infant Mental Health (IMH) consulting practice and provides reflective supervision for the First3Years organization in its work to enlarge infant mental health training and its acquisition of official IMH Endorsement.

Another student was hired as the Program Coordinator for a local nursery/preschool which provides services for children who have a family member who is HIV + or has AIDS, for children with various special needs, children who are in the CPS system, and also for typically developing children.

Some students have worked as consultants for private preschools to help them set up developmentally appropriate classrooms.

One student was first employed in an early childhood intervention program and then helped start a private special needs preschool. After that she developed and implemented a respite program for special needs children, co-supervised students at UT Dallas through a U.S Department of Education training grant, and she currently is a clinical lecturer and supervisor in the master's program in human development and early childhood disorders (HDCD).

Other students choose to teach:

Teaching in PPCD (Public School Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities) and special education classes in school districts

Several of our students get the Alternative Teaching Certification and then teach in PPCD and with elementary-aged special needs children.

Teaching in public school programs

The degree will qualify for you to take positions as Educational Coordinator/Parent Advocate at Even Start programs in the area.

One of our current students, as she completes her degree, is working at Dallas Services Even Start program as a Parent Advocate/Parent Educator, working with predominantly Spanish-speaking families. Fluent bilingual skills are very helpful.

Teaching in private preschools

Some students choose to teach in private preschools for ages birth-through-four years of age that typically serve developing children and children with delays and/or disabilities.

Several students have gone on to pursue a PhD after receiving their M.S. in HDCD, with the intent of working in a faculty position and pursuing a research career. Others seek additional clinical training.

You need to decide how specialized you want to be. Is being a developmental specialist (looking at the whole child and working with the families) what you prefer? Do you mainly want to work in a clinic or hospital setting, do home visits, or work in a lab? Do you prefer frequent or limited parent involvement and the challenge of helping families find the resources they need?

With this degree, you will typically work with children and their families over time to develop a supportive relationship and to educate and empower them to advocate for their child. You will team with other disciplines to do assessments and implement intervention plans. There are many opportunities available with this degree. If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact us.