



# Online

## Master's Degree in Child and Family Studies

*University of Southern Mississippi*

*Department of Child and Family Studies*

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The Department of Child and Family Studies at The University of Southern Mississippi now offers a fully online Master's of Science degree in Child and Family Studies designed for working professionals and others interested in issues that affect children and families. This degree is a totally online program that focuses on the integration of theory, research, and experiential learning. It builds on a foundation in family systems theory and emphasizes leadership, critical thinking skills, and the connection between research and practice. Students are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote quality of life and to serve as an effective advocate for families across the lifespan. The program graduates professionals who create positive change through careers in organizations, agencies, and educational settings that serve children and families. The curriculum is based upon a developmental lifespan approach and includes 36 hours of the following coursework:

CD 650	Theories in Child and Family Studies	3 hrs
CD 652	Advanced Child Development	3 hrs
FAM 601	Program Evaluation and Assessment	3 hrs
FAM 603	Parenting Across the Lifespan	3 hrs
FAM 605	Family Advocacy	3 hrs
FAM 633	Adolescence and the Family System	3 hrs
FAM 650	Individual & Family Life Cycle Development	3 hrs
FAM 652	Marriage Education	3 hrs
FAM 653	Adulthood and Aging in the Family System	3 hrs
REF 601	Educational Research	3 hrs
FAM 690	Practicum in Child and Family Studies	3 hrs
AND	AND	AND
FAM 691	Research in Child and Family Studies	3 hrs
OR	OR	OR
CD 698	Thesis	<u>6 hrs</u>
	TOTAL	36 HRS

*Additional elective: CD 688 Medical Aspects of Developmental Disabilities*

# Department of Child and Family Studies

## MS in Child and Family Studies

### *Course Descriptions*

#### **CD 650 Theories in Child and Family Studies (3 hrs)**

This course is designed to equip students with comprehensive knowledge, skill, and understanding of children and families. Students will examine and apply selected theories and research in Child and Family Studies to address current challenges and critical issues important to professionals in the field. Course content can be applied both personally and professionally in order to promote optimal development of children and improve quality of life for individuals and families.

#### **CD 652 Advanced Child Development (3 hrs)**

The over-arching goals of this course are to explore optimal development in children and assess the impact of a child's early years on life potential. Students will examine similarities and differences in conceptions of child development and connect these varying conceptual approaches to developmentally appropriate strategies. Emphasis will be on professional practice to effectively promote children's development, including literacy and school readiness. Leadership opportunities for family professionals to make a positive impact on quality of life for children and families will be identified and stressed.

#### **FAM 601 Program Evaluation and Assessment (3 hrs)**

The major goal of this course is to explore the skills necessary to effectively design and implement evaluation of programs serving families. Emphasis will be placed on outcomes and political and social contexts of evaluation. Participants will explore opportunities for family professionals to nurture results oriented change.

#### **FAM 603 Parenting Across the Lifespan (3 hrs)**

This course examines the significant impact of parents with regard to children's development and life potential. Students will explore parenting as an evolving process that represents a privilege, a responsibility, and a life-changing role. Parenting theories and programs, as well as current research in the field, will be analyzed in the context of discovering and building on parenting strengths.

#### **FAM 605 Family Advocacy (3 hrs)**

This course emphasizes the critical need for family professionals to develop and apply advocacy and leadership skills. Students will explore historical development of laws and public policy affecting families and the role and ethical responsibilities of family professionals. The formation of social values, respect for the diversity of values, and the social consequences of value choices are analyzed. In addition, strategies for effective networking with community agencies are examined.

#### **FAM 633 Adolescence and the Family System (3 hrs)**

This course will equip students to integrate theory and research for effective professional practice that focuses on families with adolescent members. Utilizing a systemic lens, students will examine issues important to adolescents, families, and professionals to successfully navigate this significant developmental stage. The assessment of family strengths and resources will be emphasized through the analysis of specific contemporary issues related to adolescents and their families.

#### **FAM 650 Individual and Life Cycle Development (3 hrs)**

The interactional impact of individuals, families and communities is examined from a developmental life cycle perspective. Students will explore and assess the value of the modifying influences of culture, class, gender, and education. Challenges facing family professionals will be evaluated using current research and literature.

#### **FAM 652 Marriage Education (3 hrs)**

Using a systemic approach, this course is designed to provide family professionals knowledge and skills to strengthen relationships across diverse contexts. Students will explore the impact of relationships on all aspects of the ecological model and apply evidence-based strategies to promote commitment and communication within relationships.

#### **FAM 653 Adulthood and Aging in the Family System (3 hrs)**

It takes a lifetime to prepare for old age. Students will explore the concept of finishing well based on focused preparation and successful adaptation to aging. Students will gain knowledge and skills necessary for effectively coping with multiple losses associated with aging and optimization of the aging process. Emphasis will be on skills and concepts needed for family professionals to enhance existing relationships in families with aging members and to identify available resources.

#### **REF 601 Educational Research (3 hrs)**

The purpose of REF 601 is to provide a foundation in research methods and application through balanced practical and theoretical applications. The course provides an orientation to the information, skills, and competencies necessary to understanding research in education, along with a rudimentary introduction to conducting action research.

#### **FAM 690 Practicum in Child and Family Studies (3 hrs)**

The practicum is a synthesis experience that allows students to transform theory and principles into practical application in an approved human services setting. Students will utilize knowledge and skills developed throughout the Master's program to generate new knowledge based on action research conducted at the practicum site. Emphasis will be on opportunities for family professionals to serve as catalysts for positive change throughout careers serving children and families.

#### **FAM 691 Research in Child and Family Studies (3 hrs)**

This course is designed to guide the student through the entire research process. Working directly with a professor, students will formulate a research question, review literature, propose a study design, develop and submit an IRB, collect and analyze data, and write up results and discussion. Students' research will be presented at several student research symposia and should lead to a professional presentation at a state, regional, or national conference and/or the preparation of a professional manuscript suitable for publication.