"Coming from the field of education and certified as a child life specialist, I knew I wanted to pursue a career in working with children and families. This program was exactly what I was looking for and allowed me the flexibility to work full-time in the process of obtaining my graduate degree. From the classes taught by phenomenal faculty to the hands-on practicum experiences, I have obtained so much knowledge about families, about children, and about how to help families remain functional at any point in their often arduous roads. Now I can confidently pursue my passion as an Army wife - supporting military families."

JENNIFER BARTER

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THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY

A fully online program!
MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Master of Science online program in Child and Family Studies is to prepare students for leadership positions in profit and nonprofit, private and public agencies, and organizations that serve diverse populations of children, families and communities. The faculty emphasizes a systemic theoretical perspective that allows students to integrate theory, policy and practice to effectively conceptualize and address issues impacting contemporary families. The importance of professionalism, lifelong learning and scholarship are accentuated throughout the program. Graduates are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to improve the quality of life for children, families and communities.

Program Overview

The Master of Science in child and family studies is a 37-hour, part-time, fully online program designed for students interested in 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 learn the knowledge and skills necessary to promote quality of life and serve as effective advocates for children and families.

The program prepares graduates to work as child and family professionals to improve the human condition through careers in both public and private organizations, agencies and educational settings that serve children and families. Program graduates are also prepared to pursue advanced graduate work at the specialist and doctoral levels.

Because the program is fully online, it is available to students worldwide who wish to earn a master's degree without relocating or relinquishing current employment.

"I chose to attend The University of Southern Mississippi for the master's program in child and family studies for many reasons. As an active duty Air Force nurse, I have the highest expectations for myself and my education. I desired a program that would both challenge me and prepare me well for my future. The Child and Family Studies program offered content that was challenging and coursework that required continued effort and dedication. The flexibility of the online format was essential for my lifestyle, and, fortunately, Southern Miss offers a very high-speed online program. The learning Web page, online classrooms, testing and assignments systems work well and are easy to access and navigate. The continued support of the faculty and staff was imperative to my success in this program. I highly recommend Southern Miss' Child and Family Studies master's program to anyone who desires a rewarding career as a family professional."

1LT. CAITLIN SCHALL, USAF, RN-BSN, CPN
Admission Information

The CFS MS Admissions Committee collectively considers four criteria when reviewing applications. The committee is looking for students who are academically strong and will bring diverse perspectives to the program.

- Acceptable scores on the verbal and analytical/written sections of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE)
- Minimum overall undergraduate GPA of 3.0 from a regionally accredited university in a related field of study and a 3.25 GPA in the last 64 hours of study
- Submission of statement of personal and professional goals
- Three letters of reference with a preference for two letters from former faculty members and one letter from a supervisor or employer

Applicants who have been out of college for several years may submit references from supervisors or employers.

The admission procedure is completed online through the Southern Miss Graduate School website: www.usm.edu/graduate-school/apply-graduate-school. Priority consideration is given to those who apply by April 15 for fall admission. We continue to accept applications as long as space is available.

General Information

The University of Southern Mississippi is fully accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). Located in the College of Education and Psychology, the Department of Child and Family Studies (CFS) offers both undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Students may earn a BS in child and family studies with an emphasis in either family relations or child development. The department has two graduate degree programs: Child and Family Studies MS (fully online) and Marriage and Family Therapy MS. The MS in child and family studies is a generalist practitioner degree, while the MS in marriage and family therapy is a clinical degree. The department also participates in the interdisciplinary minor in gerontology and graduate certificate in gerontology.
"I have always had a passion for working with children and families. The master's program in child and family studies provided me with the knowledge and skills that I needed to help make a difference in the lives of children and families but also in my community. After graduation, I obtained a job as an early intervention specialist. On a daily basis, I use the knowledge and skills I learned not only from the textbooks, but also from former professors.”

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Faculty

Department of Child and Family Studies faculty truly value each student in the program and work hard to ensure student success. As such, the faculty is committed to the following:

- Quality student mentoring and advising
- Excellence in teaching
- Meaningful applied research
- Relevant community outreach and engagement
- Enhancing the quality of life for children, families and communities
- Significant professional service

Our faculty includes Certified Family Life Educators, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, and experts in child development.

Financial Assistance

Opportunities for financial assistance are available through the Office of Financial Aid (www.usm.edu/financial-aid) and through the Graduate School (www.usm.edu/graduate-school/funding-resources).

Tuition

Out-of-state students in the CFS MS online program are exempt from having to pay out-of-state tuition charges. Tuition rates and fees can be located at www.usm.edu/graduate-school/tuition-fees. All students in the online program pay the in-state tuition rate.

Program Specifics

The CFS MS program is structured to accommodate working professionals through part-time coursework each semester. Students will take seven hours the first semester and then six hours each semester after that for two calendar years (including summers). The program requires all students to take an established core of foundational courses necessary to meet specific student needs and career goals.

"I wanted to pursue a master’s degree but wasn’t ready to quit a job that I loved. Southern Miss’ online Child and Family Studies program allowed me to do both. I graduated with a much better understanding of families and the systems in which they work and an amazing opportunity to share my passion for the field of child life as an adjunct professor. I highly recommend this program to anyone!"

MAGGIE BUTLER, MS, CCLIS, INPATIENT/ PICU CHILD LIFE SPECIALIST, CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL AT ERLANGER, ADJUNCT PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE CHATTANOOGA

Career Opportunities

Graduates of this program have access to a wide range of professional opportunities including, but not limited to, the following:

- Certified Family Life Educator
- Early Childhood Educator
- Preschool Teacher/Director
- Intervention Specialist
- Therapeutic Childcare Specialist
- Substance Abuse Specialist
- Sexual Health Educator
- Foster Care Coordinator
- Elementary, Middle and High School Educator
- Nonprofit Program Manager
- Family Program Administrator
- Child Life Specialist
- College Instructor
- Resource Specialist
- Developmental Play Specialist