BECOMING A
PLAY SPECIALIST
COULD B 4 U!

“Helping children to manage their hospital stay is really rewarding.”
– Tui, Play Specialist
WHAT DOES A HOSPITAL PLAY SPECIALIST DO?

Play is vital to children’s and young people’s development. From the earliest age, play helps children to learn, make friends, develop relationships and to have fun. Hospital play specialists help infants, children and young people to continue to enjoy normal activities despite being sick, and to feel less anxious about their hospital experience and treatment.

Hospital play specialists work as members of the healthcare team. They use play and other activities to help children and young people understand why they are in hospital. They also help to prepare and support children to cope with the stressful experiences that often go along with being in hospital, such as surgery or other procedures. They provide programmes in activity rooms, on wards and in areas where procedures are carried out, such as treatment rooms and emergency departments. Play specialists sometimes work in the community as well.

Most hospital play programmes include early childhood education services. In these programmes, children can continue to participate in curriculum-based educational activities just as they would in their regular early childhood centre.

WHAT SUBJECTS DO I NEED TO TAKE AT SCHOOL?

There are no specific subjects you need to take to become a play specialist.

HOW DO I GET INTO IT?

Most play specialists are registered teachers with early childhood teaching qualifications, but there are sometimes opportunities for people with relevant degrees in other fields. Additional qualifications in areas such as psychology, special education, or counselling may be helpful. After at least two years work as a hospital play specialist, you can apply for certification.

WILL I GET A JOB AFTER STUDYING?

Most paediatric units employ play specialists, but the field is quite small. You are more likely to be employed if you have gained work experience in a relevant professional field following graduation.

WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

Check out: www.healthcareers.org.nz  
or: www.hospitalplay.org.nz