

## Childhood Chronic Illness: Impact on Family Development

**PALS Program**, also known as **Childhood Chronic Illness: Impact on Family Development (PEDS 281)**, is a volunteer program serving chronically ill pediatric patients at Lucile Packard Children's Hospital. The program matches first-year medical and physician assistant students with pediatric patient partners. Patients enjoy the support and companionship of their student partner, and students learn about the impact of chronic illness on the patient and their family. Pals meet regularly throughout the academic year in a variety of contexts, including medical appointments and fun bonding activities. Through these meetups, pals build strong, meaningful relationships with each other.



In addition to partnering with a pediatric patient, students attend bimonthly class meetings that delve into the care of the pediatric patient, common pediatric conditions, mental health of families dealing with chronic illness, and ethics around treating minors. Guests such as social workers, child life specialists, former patients, and bereaved parents frequent the classroom. The class also features "field trips" to Lucile Packard's Hospital School and Ronald McDonald House. Upon finishing this course, students are equipped to better understand the lives of chronically ill pediatric patients and their families. This, in turn, enables students to provide more empathetic and compassionate care in the clinical setting.

