HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY STUDIES, B.S. (UNIVERSITY COLLEGE)

Begin Campus: Any Penn State Campus

End Campus: Brandywine, DuBois, Fayette, Mont Alto, Scranton, Shenango, York

Program Description

This major is a multidisciplinary program that examines the development of individuals and families across the life span. HDFS prepares graduates for professional, managerial, or scientific roles in health and human services professions, in public and nonprofit agencies, and in business and industry, as well as for advanced professional or graduate study. Students obtain a broad background in individual and family development across the life span. Courses emphasize biological, psychological, social/cultural, and economic aspects of development as well as applied skill development. We strive for our curriculum (and the experienced and opportunities we extend to students) to foster cultural humility and highlight diverse characteristics, contexts and considerations that impact individuals, families, and communities.

Two options are available within the major:

1. Human Development and Family Science Option
2. Developmental Science for Health Professions Option

All students pursuing the HDFS B.S. are guided to complete a capstone experience customized to their interests. Capstones may include approved field experiences (internships), guided research experiences/projects, and advanced coursework selected to align with individual student interests.

Human Development and Family Science Option

Available at the following campuses: Altoona, Brandywine, DuBois, Fayette, Harrisburg, Mont Alto, Scranton, Shenango, University Park, World Campus, York

This option focuses on the acquisition and application of scientific knowledge about development and family functioning across the life span for the purposes of enhancing personal and family development. Courses emphasize:

1. understanding the biological, psychological, and social development across the life span, and the structuring and functioning of families;
2. understanding basic theoretical and methodological issues; and
3. the development of applied skills in intervention and evaluation, prevention, and in the formulation of social policy.

Students in this option often pursue internships in service settings that work with children, youth, and/or adults. Typical employment settings include preschools, daycare centers, hospital programs for children, youth, and families, institutional and community mental health programs for individuals and families, programs for abused or neglected children and adolescents, women's resource centers, human resources programs, employee assistance programs, nursing homes, area agencies on aging and other community settings for older adults, and public welfare and family service agencies. This option also provides preparation for advanced training in careers in developmental or family research, teaching at a college or university, or for professional careers that require graduate training. Typical postgraduate pursuits of students completing this option include graduate study in human development, family studies, psychology, or sociology, or advanced professional training in psychology, law, behavioral health, counseling or social work, or other programs related to services for individuals and families.

Developmental Science for Health Professions Option

Available at the following campuses: Altoona, Brandywine, DuBois, Fayette, Mont Alto, Scranton, Shenango, University Park, York

This option is designed for students interested in focusing on human development/developmental science as a foundation to pursue health-related post graduate studies or work careers. This option guides students to acquire and apply scientific knowledge about human development (and family functioning) across the life span; emphasizing understanding biological, psychological, and social development across the life span. Additional coursework focuses on health across contexts. Students also select science foundation courses to complement their study of development across the lifespan and align with their career/post-graduate study interests. Typical postgraduate pursuits of students completing this option include graduate or professional studies in health-related areas (e.g. pediatrics, adolescent medicine, geriatrics, family medicine, psychiatry).

What is Human Development and Family Studies?

Penn State's Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS) program prepares students for careers across a wide range of human service, healthcare, and helping professions. The HDFS degree is grounded in research-based knowledge on the psychological, biological, social, cultural, and economic influences that impact the well-being of individuals, families, and communities across the lifespan. HDFS coursework guides students to develop skills for working with and caring for diverse individuals and groups through emphasizing mindfulness, compassion, diversity, equity, advocacy and inclusion. Students take courses on infancy, childhood, and adolescent development, transitioning and thriving in adulthood, and healthy aging. Classroom experiences are supplemented by a range of engaged learning opportunities, including internships, research participation, and community partnerships through which HDFS students acquire skills preparing them for impactful careers. The program's flexible curriculum allows academic pathways and engagement experiences to be customized to align with students' career goals.

You Might Like This Program If...

- You are passionate about pursuing work focused on improving the lives and wellness of individuals, families, and communities.
- You are interested to learn about individual, family, community, and social factors influencing development as well as evidence-based practices that promote the cognitive, social, physical, and emotional well-being of children, adults, families, organizations, and communities.
- You are enthusiastic to use flexible degree requirements and integrated opportunities to pursue career exploration, experiential and engaged learning, and skill development specialized to your specific career goals.