

## CHILD PLAY SPECIALIST TRAINING COURSE

### 1. Introduction

Il Porto dei piccoli, a non-profit association founded in Genoa in 2005, offers **daily play and educational support** in pediatric facilities, at home and in the local area to young patients and their families. The Porto dei piccoli professionals work closely with the healthcare team, taking inspiration from the Anglo-Saxon and American model of the Play Specialist.

### 2. CPS training course: History and development.

In 2021 it was decided to construct a training course that would enable the trainee to acquire all the various specific skills to be able to best manage the various abilities, such as: plans and organize play activities and creating an environment that encourages playful activities. The drafting of the first training hypothesis took place with Alfa (Regional Agency for Employment Training and Accreditation) of Regione Liguria in 2018.

In 2020 the training path was revised with CNOS FAP (Centro Nazionale Opere Salesiane - Formazione e Aggiornamento Professionale), a training institution recognized by the Liguria Region and thanks to the operational program **REGIONE LIGURIA FONDO SOCIALE EUROPEO 2014-2020** "Match point" and the funds, we obtained to start the training course for the issue of the certificate SPECIALIST IN CHILD PLAY TECHNIQUES (CHILD PLAY SPECIALIST).

This training course, realized with the Liguria Region, is the first in Italy to acquire the diploma for this professional figure, therefore a selection at the entrance of participants has been envisaged according to the type of degree or diploma, motivation, and aptitude.

The **regional decree** was very important to carry out our course. This decree was fundamental in recognizing the professional figure and the importance of introducing this figure in the hospital context and adopting play-educational techniques to increase socialization and learning. In addition, **the decree refers to play as a tool that allows the child to express** his or her conflicts and anxieties and to familiarize himself or herself with potentially disturbing hospital situations and objects.

### 3. Our course: the goal, duration, and subjects

The goal of the Play Specialist training course, offered by Il Porto dei Piccoli, is to train professionals able to build and develop supportive and child-oriented relationships within the pediatric hospital context using games and play.

#### Recipients

Persons with a bachelor or master's degree in psychology and related disciplines (such as educational sciences, pedagogy, philosophy, and communication sciences)

#### Duration

600 total hours organized as follows:

300 hours for basic and professionalizing module

300 hours of internship to be carried out in hospitals

We involved specialist working in our association, nurses and doctors from the Gaslini Institute and external professionals.

The lessons included various disciplines: psychology, pedagogy, English language, ethics, practical subjects for the workshop part such as art therapy, music therapy, singing, animation activities and biology.

The 300 hours were divided into basic modules covering the following different subject areas: organizational elements of the course, institutional and legislative socio/cultural area, pediatrics, psychology, elements of first aid, emergency psychology, which in turn included different disciplines and specific content.

In addition, professionalization modules were integrated with more specific content such as: early childhood observation techniques, methods for recognizing a child's needs, active listening techniques, coping with age group, elements of marine biology.

For the internship at the Institute G. Gaslini in Genoa, we identify specific department, in which the trainees had the objective of observing the dynamics, understanding, and experiencing how to relate to children and their families, using the tool of play in medical and nursing procedures.

The goal of this course is to train professionals able to build and develop supportive and child-oriented relationships within the pediatric hospital context using games and play.

The students in the end of the course, acquired important skills such as:

Designing autonomous interventions focus on the CPS methodology.

- Identify areas of intervention (day hospital, in-patient room, etc.)
- Identify age groups and type of illness or vulnerability.
- Define the pedagogical and didactic objectives.
- Identify the play materials to use in the hospital.
- Be sensitive and empathic.