

# LLM and Family

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When I moved to Chicago to pursue the LLM at Northwestern University in 2018, my wife and our first daughter, at the time at the age of 1 year and 8 months, joined me. The fact that we have a daughter did not affect at all our family decision in relation to the LLM. On the contrary, it was an incentive! We felt that it would be the perfect opportunity for us to spend more time together and to enjoy our daughter's early age.

Of course, the logistics are a little more complex. We chose to pay a bit more for an apartment without carpet (children make a lot of dirt on the floor) and with a washer and dryer machine inside the apartment. Also, we rented an Airbnb for a week before moving permanently into our apartment, so we had time to buy furniture and organize our home!

Chicago is an incredible city for children, especially the area where Northwestern is located. There are several public park options, the Art Institute, the Aquarium, the Planetarium – all of which have certain dates when Chicago residents may visit for free! There is also the Children's Museum, a closed park with lots of options only for kids, located at the Navy Pier. The annual ticket for the entire family is not expensive.

The city is also quite flat, which makes it easy to get around by stroller. There are access points for circulation with the stroller (avoiding the need to climb stairs), but it ends up being necessary to research beforehand to plan the path and walk a little further. The buses are adapted, which facilitates entry and exit, as well as the trip itself. It is also worth mentioning that in times of snow, the Streeterville area is usually cleaned quickly, which allows for continuous movement with the strollers (it is worth buying a snow cover!).

The buildings in which Northwestern students usually live commonly have a swimming pool and barbecue grills. Despite not having a playground (as it is common in Brazil), you can enjoy it a lot (especially in the summer).

In our second year there, we decided to place our daughter (then 3 years old) in a private school. As you can imagine, it's not cheap, but it's affordable (as I was working there and getting paid in dollars). The big problem was adaptation. Although our daughter was already very communicative at the time, she spoke little English, so she suffered (and so did we) to get used to the idea of being at school without her parents.

Pediatric appointments were great. We chose a doctor who worked at a clinic close to our apartment and we liked her a lot. Dr. Pria Sharma of Northwestern Children's Practice. The appointments were covered by the university's health plan—this is an important point of attention: we had to pay for 3 health plans (mine, my wife's and daughter's), which really didn't come cheap.

To complete our "LLM and family" experience, my wife became pregnant in 2019 and our second daughter was born in Chicago at the end of that year. Overall, the pregnancy was smooth - we chose a gynecologist close to our home and did the standard follow-up (which does not have the same number of ultrasounds as one may be used to in a Brazilian pregnancy). The health plan (then from the firm I was working at) covered most of the costs, so we didn't have any significant expenses.

Finally, it's worth planning your trip back to Brazil with a few extra luggage - one probably full of toys (in our case, from tons of Lego to a bicycle!).

