



The Child Development Associate National Credentialing Program

Making A Difference
in the Early Care and Education
of Young Children

GENERAL INFORMATION

**August
2005**

THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE (CDA) NATIONAL CREDENTIALING PROGRAM

The Council for Professional Recognition (*the Council*), headquartered in Washington, D.C., operates the Child Development Associate (CDA) National Credentialing Program. Focusing on the skills of early child care and education professionals, the program is designed to provide performance-based training, assessment, and credentialing of child care staff, home visitors, and family child care providers. The CDA Program represents a national effort to credential qualified caregivers who work with children from birth through age five.

These caregivers, Child Development Associates (*CDAs*), demonstrate their ability to nurture children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual growth in a child development framework. Some are center-based caregivers, others are family child care providers, and still others are home visitors. The proof of their competence is the CDA Credential. To date, **there are more than 200,000 CDAs** across the country—in all 50 states, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the U.S. territories of Guam and the Virgin Islands.

This booklet provides detailed information about the assessment processes for center-based, family child care, and home visitor personnel who meet the education and experience requirements before applying for assessment.

In addition, this booklet also provides information about the Council's one-year training program, the CDA Professional Preparation Program (*CDA P₃*). This program is for individuals who **do not** meet the specific education and experience requirements to apply for CDA assessment. This one-year training program is designed to prepare these child care workers for CDA assessment and credentialing.

WHAT IS A CDA?

A Child Development Associate is an individual who has successfully completed a CDA assessment and has been awarded the CDA Credential. S/he is able to meet the specific needs of children and works with parents and other adults to nurture children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual growth in a child development framework.

A CDA is an individual who has demonstrated competence in her/his ability to meet the CDA Competency Goals through her/his work in a center-based, home visitor or family child care program. In addition, an individual who has demonstrated competence in meeting bilingual CDA criteria is a CDA with a Bilingual Specialization.

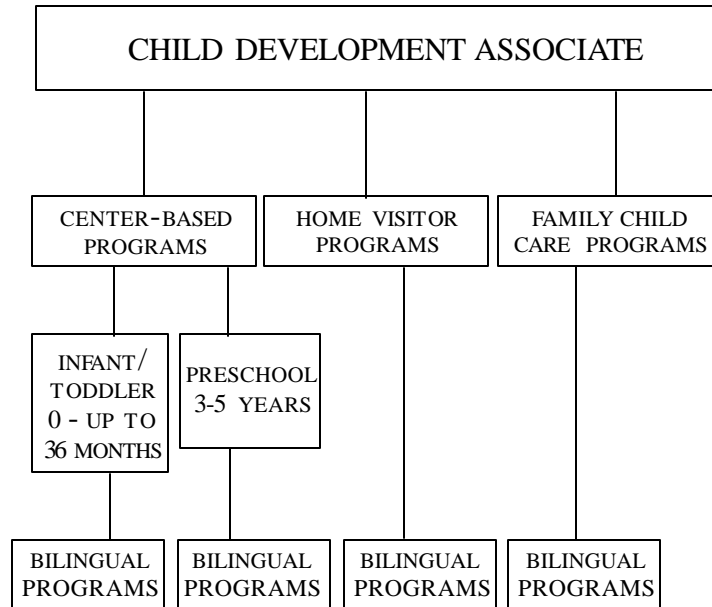
THE CDA COMPETENCY STANDARDS

The CDA Competency Standards are the core of the CDA program. Composed of Goals and Functional Areas, they are statements of the skills needed to be a competent caregiver and the basis upon which caregivers are assessed.

While the Competency Goals establish the framework for caregiver behavior, the 13 Functional Areas describe the major tasks or functions caregivers must complete in order to carry out the Competency Goals.

CDA Competency Goals	Functional Areas
I. To establish and maintain a safe, healthy learning environment	1. Safe 2. Healthy 3. Learning Environment
II. To advance physical and intellectual competence	4. Physical 5. Cognitive 6. Communication 7. Creative
III. To support social and emotional development and to provide positive guidance	8. Self 9. Social 10. Guidance
IV. To establish positive and productive relationships with families	11. Families
V. To ensure a well-run, purposeful program responsive to participant needs	12. Program Management
VI. To maintain a commitment to professionalism	13. Professionalism

CDA SETTINGS



Settings: Center-based, Home Visitor, Family Child Care

Age-Level Endorsements: 0-3 years; 3-5 years

Specialization: Bilingual

Center-Based

The Center-based setting is a state-approved child development center where a Candidate can be observed working as a primary caregiver with a group of children. Candidates seeking a Preschool endorsement are assessed working with **children aged 3-5 years** . Candidates seeking an Infant/Toddler endorsement are assessed working with **children aged birth to 36 months** .

Home Visitor

The Home Visitor setting is an established program of **home visits with families with children 5 years old or younger** to support parents in meeting the needs of their young children. In this setting, regular home visits are the primary method of program delivery.

Family Child Care

The Family Child Care setting is a family child care home that meets at least the minimum level of applicable state and local regulations. Candidates can be observed working as a primary caregiver with at least **two children, 5 years old or younger**, who are not related to the Candidate by blood, marriage, or other legal relationship.

Bilingual Specialization

Caregivers working in bilingual child care settings can also earn a CDA Credential with a Bilingual Specialization. The Bilingual Specialization is an extension of an existing credential. It acknowledges the unique skills required to work in bilingual child care settings. Bilingual Specialization materials are only available for Spanish/English languages. However, caregivers who work in bilingual programs using other languages are eligible for this credential extension and should contact the Council for more information.

THE CDA ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

Center-based, Family Child Care, and Home Visitor early child care and education workers with some education and experience are assessed (*evaluated*) by the Council. The type of assessment, however, is determined by the caregiver's work setting. Center-based and family child care providers are assessed using the same process; home visitors are assessed using another process.

The following pages address the qualifications and documentation requirements for assessment in all three settings. Caregivers must meet all requirements before applying for assessment.

Center-Based and Family Child Care

Assessment Requirements

- **Be 18 years of age or older**
- **Hold a high school diploma or GED**
- **Have 480 hours of experience working with children** within the past five years
- **Have 120 clock hours of formal child care education** within the past five years

Bilingual Candidates must meet the above requirements and be able to speak, read, and write well enough in both English and another language to understand and be understood by both children and adults.

Information about CDA training is available from a variety of sources, including employers, Head Start programs, and postsecondary institutions.

The 120 clock hours of education must be documented, with no fewer than 10 hours in each of the following content areas:

- 1) Planning a safe, healthy environment to invite learning;
- 2) Steps to advance children's physical and intellectual development;

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- 3) Positive ways to support children's social and emotional development;
 - 4) Strategies to establish productive relationships with families;
 - 5) Strategies to manage an effective program operation;
 - 6) Maintaining a commitment to professionalism;
 - 7) Observing and recording children's behavior;
 - 8) Principles of child growth and development.

The requirement for formal child care education may be met through participation in the wide variety of training available in the field, including in-service. While the formal education hours can be for credit or noncredit, the hours must be through an agency or organization with expertise in early childhood teacher preparation. The agency or organization must provide verification of the Candidate's education in the form of a transcript, certificate, or letter.

Documentation of Competence

Center-based and Family Child Care CDA Candidates must submit documents that verify their competence in early child care and education. These include:

- ***A Professional Resource File:*** A collection of reference materials related to Candidate's work.
- ***Parent Opinion Questionnaires:*** Feedback from parents with children in the Candidate's classroom or family child care home.
- ***The CDA Assessment Observation Instrument:*** Recorded observations of the Candidate's skills while working with children and families as primary caregiver.
- ***An Oral Interview:*** Interview conducted by a Council-trained Representative to evaluate the Candidate's skills and knowledge of good early child care practices.
- ***A Written Assessment:*** A two-hour, multiple-choice examination administered by a Council Representative.

Home Visitor

Assessment Requirements

- Be **18 years of age or older**
- Hold a **high school diploma or GED**
- Have **480 hours of experience working with families in a home visitor program** within the past five years
- Have **120 clock hours of formal child care education** within the past five years

Bilingual Candidates must meet the above requirements and be able to speak, read, and write well enough in both English and another language to understand and be understood by both children and adults.

Home Visitor Candidates are assessed through a Local Assessment Team (LAT) process. The team consists of four members: **a)** the CDA Candidate; **b)** an early childhood professional (*the Advisor*); **c)** a Parent/Community Representative; and **d)** a Council Representative.

Documentation of Competence

Team members collect information about Candidate's work in relation to the six CDA Competency Standards and the 13 Functional Areas. These include:

- **A Portfolio:** A collection of materials related to Candidate's work.
- **Parent Opinion Questionnaires:** Feedback from parents in the Candidate's caseload.
- **The Council Representative Observation:** Recorded observations by the Council Representative of the Candidate's skills during home visits.
- **The Advisor Report Form:** Recorded observations by the Advisor of the Candidate's skills during home visits.
- **The Parent/Community Representative Report Form:** Recorded observations by the Parent/Community Representative of the Candidate's skills during home visits.
- **Local Assessment Team meeting:** Meeting where members of the team—Candidate, Council Rep, Advisor, and P/C Rep—review the information collected and recommend whether or not to award the credential.

How to Apply for CDA Assessment

Anyone interested in applying for the CDA Credential should go online at www.cdacouncil.org and request an application, or mail in the appropriate form at the back of this booklet to the address provided.

How Much Does It Cost?

The cost of the application packet is \$15.00 + \$5.00 shipping and handling; **the fee for Assessment is \$325.00.**

How Long Does It Take?

Once Candidates complete documentation, the application may be submitted to the Council to request a Verification Visit or a Local Assessment Team (LAT) meeting. **The Council schedules these four times a year.** They are as follows:

Assessments to Occur	Application Deadline
1st Quarter: January, February, or March	December 1
2nd Quarter: April, May or June	March 1
3rd Quarter: July, August, or September	June 1
4th Quarter: October, November, or December	September 1

Making a Determination

Once the Candidate completes all documentation requirements, the evidence is submitted either to the Local Assessment Team or to the Council for review, and a decision is made whether to issue the credential. The initial CDA Credential is valid for three years and may be renewed for the same setting and age-level endorsement for five-year periods thereafter.

THE CDA PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION PROGRAM (CDA P₃)

The CDA Professional Preparation Program (CDA P₃), the Council's one-year formal education program, is for individuals with no child care experience and/or education, as well as for those who are already employed in the child care field. The program provides Candidates with child development course work and field experiences in child care settings, enabling them to build the necessary skills to become a Child Development Associate.

Inherent in its design as a national system, the CDA P₃ makes high quality professional preparation more accessible to caregivers who want to become Child Development Associates. Colleges and universities provide course work and monitor training, which gives the CDA Credential academic credibility. This linkage also allows CDA training to be more closely integrated with other forms of early childhood career preparation.

The CDA P₃ offers Center-based Preschool, Center-based Infant/Toddler and Family Child Care endorsements. Bilingual Specializations are also available. **Please note: The Home Visitor endorsement is not available for CDA P₃ Candidates.**

Learning in Three Phases

Phase I - Field Work

Candidates work with children, participating in programs that are specific to the setting, age-level endorsement, and specialization in which they will receive their CDA Credential. They also complete readings and exercises in the training manual, *Essentials for Child Development Associates Working with Young Children*.

A Field Advisor monitors the Candidate's progress and provides overall guidance for the application of the principles in *Essentials*. Advisors also receive the *Field Advisor's Guide*, which accompanies the curriculum. Candidates choose their own Field Advisors, based on specific eligibility requirements. The Council can help Candidates locate a Field Advisor, if necessary.

Phase II - Course Work

Candidates attend a series of small or large group seminars at local community colleges or other post-secondary institutions.

A Seminar Instructor provides instruction for the eight content areas outlined in the Assessment section of this booklet (*see pages 6-7*). The instructor also administers a written examination to determine the Candidate's knowledge of appropriate early childhood practices.

Instructors use the *Seminar Instructor's Guide*, which provides an overview and an extension of the learning of the field work phase of study, as well as assignments that require follow-up during the course work phase.

Phase III - Final Evaluation

Candidates organize and practice a cohesive set of practical skills while working with young children and, guided by her/his Field Advisor, complete a final series of exercises designed to demonstrate the skills required to become a Child Development Associate.

A Council Representative interviews the Candidate to assess her/his knowledge of good early childhood practices and reviews the results of the Parent Opinion Questionnaires, the Formal Observation, and the Professional Resource File. Finally, the representative verifies performance and submits the results to the Council for review. Successful Candidates receive the CDA Credential.

How to Apply for the CDA P₃

Anyone interested in applying for the CDA Credential through the CDA P₃ should go online at www.cdacouncil.org and request a free application, or mail in the appropriate form at the back of this booklet to the address provided.

How Much Does It Cost?

The tuition for the CDA P₃ is \$1,500. This fee includes training and assessment. There is no cost for a CDA P₃ application.

How Long Does It Take?

The CDA P₃ is a one-year formal education program. The Council accepts applications once a year, and the program officially begins September 1st. However, Candidates have until September 30th to submit applications for the program.

Making a Determination

After a Candidate completes the three phases of the CDA P₃, the Council evaluates all of the materials prepared by the Candidate, and makes the final decision on whether to award the credential based on the Candidate's field work, course work, and the final evaluation.

CDA IN-STATE CHILD CARE LICENSING REGULATIONS

Each state has the power to establish qualifications for staff who work in licensed child care centers. State laws describe types of staff (Directors, Teachers, Aides) and establish guidelines regarding age, prior education, prior experience, and on-going training.

The Child Development Associate (CDA) National Credential is recognized in the child care licensing regulations in 48 states and the District of Columbia. Following is a chart delineating which position—teacher or director—a CDA may attain with her/his credential in each state. Some states require a CDA to obtain additional education and/or training, while in other states, a credential alone is the only requirement. The two states which do not include CDA in their child care licensing regulations are Idaho and Indiana.

For more information, please contact your licensing agency.

If your state's child care licensing regulations change, please contact: Council for Professional Recognition, 2460 16th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009-3575, or call 800-424-4310 or 202-265-9090.

CDA IN STATE CHILD CARE LICENSING REGULATIONS

1. States where a CDA can be a Director
2. States where a CDA can be a Director with a Credential plus education/experience
3. States where a CDA can be a Teacher
4. States where a CDA can be a Teacher with a Credential plus education/experience

State	1	2	3	4
Alabama	!			
Alaska	!			
Arizona		!	!	
Arkansas	!			
California				!
Colorado		!	!	
Connecticut		!		
Delaware		!		!
Dist.Colum.				!
Florida *				
Georgia *				
Hawaii		!		!
Illinois		!		
Iowa		!		
Kansas		!		!
Kentucky		!		
Louisiana	!			
Maine	!			
Maryland *	!			!
Massachusetts		!		!
Michigan		!		
Minnesota			!	
Mississippi		!		
Missouri		!		

* CDA is substitute for part of required training.

State	1	2	3	4
Montana	!			
Nebraska	!			
Nevada	!			
New Hampshire	!			
New Jersey			!	
New Mexico	!			
New York			!	
North Carolina		!	!	
North Dakota		!	!	
Ohio	!			
Oklahoma		!		
Oregon			!	
Pennsylvania				!
Rhode Island		!		!
South Carolina		!		
South Dakota	!			
Tennessee		!	!	
Texas		!		
Utah	!			
Vermont	!		!	
Virginia		!		!
Washington			!	
West Virginia		!		
Wisconsin				!
Wyoming		!		

To order either of these packets go online at www.cdacouncil.org or cut this form and mail to:
The Council for Professional Recognition, P.O. Box 932270, Atlanta, GA 31193-2270 or call 800-224-8103

Dear Council for Professional Recognition:

*I am interested in the **CDA Credentialing Program**. Please send me an application packet to become a CDA Candidate. I have enclosed a check or money order for \$20.00 made payable to the Council.*

Check one:

- Center-based Preschool
- Center-based Infant/Toddler
- Family Child Care
- Home Visitor

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: Area Code () _____

_____ Payment is enclosed in the amount of \$20.00 for the Assessment application packet and shipping and handling.

Dear Council for Professional Recognition:

*I am interested in enrolling in the Council's one-year formal education program, the **CDA Professional Preparation Program** (CDA P₃). Please send me a free application packet.*

Check one:

- Center-based Preschool
- Center-based Infant/Toddler
- Family Child Care

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: Area Code () _____

_____ No payment is enclosed. I understand the application is free of charge.

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