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Prepared for

*Early Childhood
Administrators
supporting staff
working towards their
CDA credential*

Director's Guide to the CDA Process

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Disclaimer: Page numbers in the CDA Competency Standards books are subject to change as the CDA council releases new editions. We will update this guide accordingly.



Director Support Builds Careers

Director involvement in the CDA process improves CDA attainment

Our experience offering CDA cohorts has provided us with insight into the factors that determine whether early childhood educators on this credential pathway will be successful. For educators who work in center settings, Director involvement significantly improves the learning experience and chance of success.

The CDA process can feel intimidating. There are a number of steps that must be carefully followed to qualify, and then there are fees, an exam, and an observation. This can create a stressful situation that makes learning more difficult. However, when staff have a supporter, it makes the process feel more manageable.

We have designed this guide to make supporting your staff simple. We explain each step, provide checklists for staying organized, and present suggestions for additional impactful supports from our experience working with early childhood professionals to attain their CDA.

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What is a CDA?

The CDA (Child Development Associate) credential is a nationally recognized credential for childhood educators. This is a credential that may **qualify staff to become a lead teacher**.

The process involves 120 training hours, a professional portfolio, an exam, and an on-site observation. The CDA is administered by the CDA Council: <https://www.cdacouncil.org/en/>

Supporting staff with their CDA allows you to increase professional knowledge, build teacher confidence, and improve workforce retention in your program.

Things to consider when helping staff choose the right track:

- Staff **must** choose the CDA for the age group that they are going to work with.
- If your staff have already completed some training hours, they should check which hours will count toward the CDA track they are interested in. (*Additional help with this on **page 8***)
- Note that the **"Family Child Care" CDA is for home providers only** and make sure that your staff do not select this track. If you hire someone with a Family CDA, they will need a new CDA to be a lead teacher because the CDA **does not** transfer.

Birth to 36 Months Infant/Toddler CDA

Early Childhood Educators who work with children from birth to 36 months and would like to gain a credential to use with this age group should apply for the Infant/Toddler CDA. Their 120 hours of professional development **must** come from classes that include information about children Birth to 36 months.

3 to 5 Years Old Preschool CDA

Early Childhood Educators who work with children from 3 to 5 years old and would like to gain a credential to use with this age group should apply for the Preschool CDA. Their 120 hours of professional development **must** come from classes that include information about children 3 to 5 years old.

What does the CDA cover?

The main component of the CDA is 120 professional training hours. These trainings **must** include information about the age groups matching the CDA track that the student selects.

Throughout this guide, page numbers in **this color** refer to the page numbers in the Competency Standards books.

CDA Subject Areas (p.10 to p.13 CS):

- 1.Planning a safe and healthy learning environment
- 2.Advancing children’s physical and intellectual development
- 3.Advancing children’s social and emotional development
- 4.Building productive relationships with families
- 5.Managing an effective program operation
- 6.Maintaining a commitment to professionalism
- 7.Observing and Recording Children’s behavior
- 8.Understanding the principles of child development and learning

CDA Training Requirement:

- Minimum of 10 hours of training in each Subject Area
- 40 additional training hours in any Subject Area(s)

Purchasing CDA Materials and getting started (p.21-24 CS):

- A Competency Standards Book in the correct age group is required for each teacher completing the CDA.
 - Teachers can preview the requirements if you keep one of these available for reference. See the links page of this guide.
- Purchasing extra copies of the *CDA Essentials for Working with Young Children* textbook to keep in a professional development resource library can help staff who are doing a self-paced CDA to work through the requirements.

CDA Requirements Checklist

Make a copy of this checklist for each CDA Applicant

- Create a YourCouncil Account
- Work at least 480 Hours with the age group matching the CDA type.
- Complete 120 Training Hours related to the chosen CDA track age group (for options see **page 9**)
 - At least 10 hours of Training in **Planning a Safe and Healthy Learning Environment**
 - At least 10 hours of Training in **Advancing Children's Physical and Intellectual Development**
 - At least 10 hours of Training in **Advancing Children's Social and Emotional Development**
 - At least 10 hours of Training in **Building Productive Relationships with Families**
 - At least 10 hours of Training in **Managing Effective Program Operation**
 - At least 10 hours of Training in **Maintaining a Commitment to Professionalism**
 - At least 10 hours of Training in **Observing and Recording Children's Behavior**
 - At least 10 hours of Training in **Understanding the Principles of Child Development and Learning**
 - 40 additional training hours with the correct age group in any combination of the above subject areas.

CDA Requirements Checklist cont.

- Purchase the CDA Competency Standards Book for the correct CDA track. It is **essential** not to lose this book as it will be needed for the observation.
- Complete a Professional Portfolio
- Begin the CDA application in the YourCouncil account. You will first complete a pre-application where you verify the information you provided in setting up the YourCouncil Account. Then you will click Initiate Application and fill the same information out again and then you will submit the CDA application.
- Enter your Director's Email - *note: The CDA council will email the program director to verify the early childhood setting. The candidate can only continue the CDA application once you, the Director, have confirmed the setting in the email you received.*
- Optional: Once you complete the CDA Application up to the point that it sends you an "awaiting payment" email, apply for a T.E.A.C.H. scholarship
- Once payment is successfully completed and received by the CDA Council, obtain your "Ready to Schedule" Notice from the CDA Council
- It is now time to schedule your Verification Visit and Exam in **whichever order works best for you:**
 - Schedule a PDS Specialist Verification Visit
 - Schedule a CDA Exam



Tracking Training History (P. 11 CS)

Checking Progress

There are multiple ways to help your staff determine how many training hours that they already have. Training hours need to be with the correct age group and provided by a certified training source.

MiRegistry Learning Record

One option for helping your staff get a sense of how many training hours they have toward their CDA requirements is to review their MiRegistry learning record with them.

Your local Great Start to Quality Resource Center can help you navigate MiRegistry

Training Certificates/Transcripts

Help your staff to gather certificates for trainings that do not appear in MiRegistry. They can still use these to confirm training hours as long as it is clear what age group the trainings were for and what the topic was.

In addition to training certificates, if the teacher has completed college credits in ECE that match the CDA age group they are working towards, they should obtain a copy of their transcripts as evidence.

Every 1 college credit is equal to 15 CDA training hours

Special Notes

Trainings required for licensing will not necessarily count toward the CDA areas. For example, the CDA Council does not accept training obtained at conferences or from individual consultants unless the training received is considered a class and is recorded in MiRegistry.

Also, if the trainings did not cover the correct age group or were not in the subject areas that they needed then the teacher would need to find additional training options.

Training Options

Community College Cohorts

This is the most structured option. Community College CDA programs can often provide college credit and build toward an associate degree or higher in Early Childhood. To find CDA programs at community colleges check here: <https://www.miaeyc.org/map/cda-training-colleges-for-college-credit/>

Every one college credit is equal to 15 CDA training hours

Non-College Cohorts

If teachers are looking for structure and support in the process of getting their CDA, but Community College is not the right option for them at this time, then a learning cohort could be a great option. Child Care Network facilitates a CDA cohort, but other options could be to form group of providers all working on their CDA together. Deadlines keep the process moving along, and learners support one another in the process. Contact Child Care Network to see when a cohort might be offered near you.

Additional Options for Cohorts and Training Hours

Teachstone - <https://teachstone.com/cda-programs/>

Quorum - <https://teachingstrategies.mlearning.com/quorum-individual-membership.html>

Care Courses - <https://www.carecourses.com/publicpages/nationalcredential>

Self-Paced / Online Courses

This option has the least structure. It is great for self-starters or staff who already have a lot of training hours toward their CDA requirements. This can be a good option for those who have reliable access to technology and want to complete the CDA requirements at their own pace.



T.E.A.C.H. Scholarships

T.E.A.C.H. scholarships are a method for supporting the cost of obtaining early childhood credentials for child care professionals. The T.E.A.C.H. scholarship can be applied to training hours at a community college or simply applied to the CDA application fee.

Who can apply?

This program is for educators who:

- Work a minimum of 20 hours per week in a licensed child care setting.
- Are pursuing a CDA and have completed the requirements to submit their CDA application.
- Earn no more than \$19.60 / hour.
- If applying the scholarship to community college training hours, the candidate must work in a program willing to sponsor the scholarship.



T.E.A.C.H. Scholarships cont.



Director Completes Employer Verification Form

- Fill out the Employer Verification Form:
<https://www.miaeyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/EMPLOYER-VERIFICATION-FORM.pdf>
- To reduce repetitive work, fill out a copy of the Employer Verification Form and make copies or laminate it so that multiple applicants can utilize it.

CDA Application Fee Only

- Direct candidates to this website for the instructions on submitting their T.E.A.C.H. scholarship application: https://www.miaeyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/CDA_Application_halfsheet_Dec2018_2.pdf

College Course Work

Employer sponsorship:

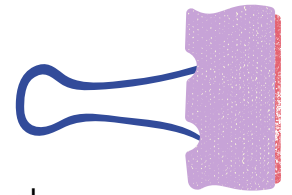
- Contribute 10% of tuition, fees, books, up to a maximum of 6 credits each semester
- Provide paid release time (up to 3 hours per week) for employees who are regularly scheduled 30 or more hours per week to attend class, complete assignments, or tend to matters required by their coursework. Release time will be reimbursed by T.E.A.C.H. at a rate of \$11 per hour.
- Award the scholarship recipient either a 2% raise or \$375 bonus when the candidate completes 9-18 credits in a year.

Step by Step for the CDA Candidate:

<https://www.miaeyc.org/pdspecialist/cda-assessment-scholarship/>

Complete Guide with images can be found under Resources on the Child Care Network Website, please see the link at the end of the guide.

Portfolio Guide



CDA Candidates will be required to complete a professional portfolio. The portfolio contains the following:

- Family Questionnaires (p.12 CS and Back of Book Resources)
- Resource Collection Documents (p.14-16 CS)
- Reflective Statements of Competence (p. 17-19 CS)
- Professional Philosophy Statements (p. 17-19 CS)

As a Director, there are opportunities to **directly support** with these two components of the portfolio:

- Family Questionnaires (p.12 CS and Back of Book Resources)
- Specific Resource Collection Items (First Aid, Menu, and Weekly Plan) (p.14 to p.16 CS)

Supporting with Family Questionnaires

A Family Questionnaire is designed to provide feedback to the CDA candidate. You can view a template here:

https://www.cdacouncil.org/storage/documents/2013_Family_Questionnaire_ENG.pdf

CDA Candidates can have a difficult time distributing the questionnaires. They need to get **at least 50%** of their surveys back. Writing a quick **cover letter** about why the candidate is collecting this information can help the candidate to get more responses. The cover letter should emphasize that filling out the questionnaire helps **both the center and the candidate**.

When families return the questionnaires the CDA candidate will review the feedback. This is a great opportunity to help them process different kinds of feedback and make a plan for future goal-setting.

Support with resource collection

CPR First Aid must be completed **IN-PERSON**. If these are only offered in your center a few times per year, consider whether you can utilize professional development funds to support CDA candidates getting outside training to complete this requirement.

These resources must be labeled and have the candidates name on them.

If a menu is not relevant to your program, you can encourage your staff to search for age-group appropriate menus online and base it on those.

Verification Visit and Exam Guide

Verification Visit Part 1 (p. 25-28 Infant/Toddler CS, p.24-27
Preschool CS, and Back of Book material)

A final step in achieving the CDA is having a Professional Development Specialist visit your program to observe the candidate for **around four hours**. CDA Candidates are responsible for locating their own PD Specialist (p. 21 Infant/Toddler CS, p.20 Preschool CS), however they can use director support with the following:

1. Help ensure that there are no center-wide events that will interfere with the observation on the scheduled day.
2. The Candidate **must** be acting as the lead teacher in the classroom during the 2-hour observation. Help to ensure that the observation is taking place with the age group of children that matches the CDA track the candidate applied for.
3. Help your staff to prepare for the verification visit by allowing them to experience the responsibilities of lead teacher by shadowing lead teachers before their observation.

If you have teachers who are struggling to find their own PD Specialist these resources can help:

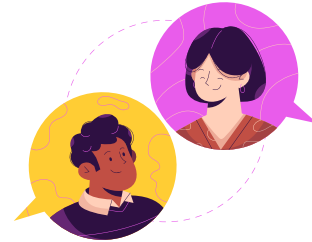
- Use the "Find a PD Specialist" tool in their CDA Council Account
- Visit the MIAEYC CDA Professional Development Hub: <https://miaeyc.elevate.compartners.com/connectionboard>



Verification Visit and Exam Guide cont.

Verification Visit Part 2 (p. 25-28 Infant/Toddler CS, p.24-27 Preschool CS, and Back of Book material)

The second part of the Verification Visit involves the PD Specialist going over the professional portfolio and CDA requirements privately with the candidate.



As the director, options to support this part of the visit are limited. However, if possible you can:

- 1. Provide a private space in your child care setting** during the visit for the PD Specialist and candidate to review the professional portfolio.
- 2. Remind the candidate that they **must** mark the verification visit complete in their YourCouncil account by logging in to their application again and selecting that the verification visit has been completed.** This allows the PD Specialist to submit their score to the CDA Council. Some candidates are very nervous and forget this step!

Exam (p. 28-31 Infant/Toddler CS, p.27-30 Preschool CS)

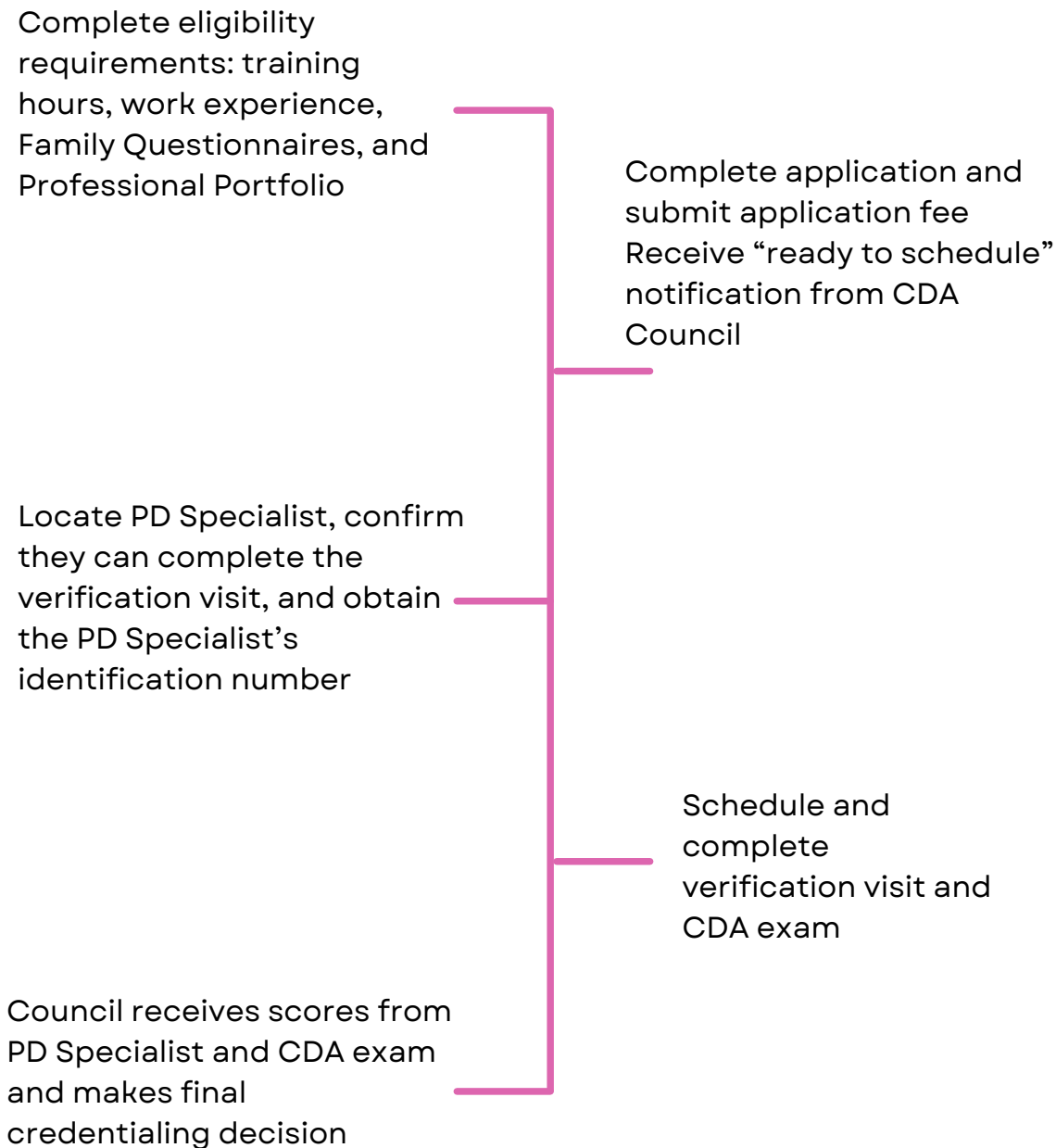
The candidate will schedule their exam as the last requirement of the CDA. You can support the candidate by allowing them time off to travel to the testing site as there are not many available to choose from.



CDA Timeline Example

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Obtaining a CDA is a time consuming commitment for your staff. They may need a CDA for the role(s) that you need to fill, but this process **cannot** be rushed. The process will vary depending on how many hours of training each individual needs and their own learning contexts. The process **can take 4-5 months on average** until the credential is successfully obtained if the provider is starting with few training hours already completed.



CDA credentials are mailed to address listed on application!

CDA Renewal

Supporting your staff with their CDA renewals can make the process very easy and demonstrate your continued investment in their career growth. It is also essential so they do not lose qualification as lead teachers or find themselves needing to complete the entire CDA process again.

Renewal can generally be completed in **one day** if the teacher has all materials needed and your support as their ECE reviewer.

CDA's are valid for 3 years from the date of issue. When you hire a teacher with a CDA credential, put their CDA renewal date on your calendar with a reminder 3-6 months out to check on their training hours.

Renewal Requirements

Valid CPR and First Aid certification. If you have this on file for them it will be easier for them to gather this evidence.

45 training hours or 4.5 CEU's after the date the CDA was issued. Helping them to pursue continued professional development will support them reaching this number of hours.

Membership in an early childhood professional organization.



Additional Support Ideas

You can be the ECE reviewer to help them complete their renewal requirements. As an ECE reviewer you will:

- Confirm that the teacher has completed 80 hours with children in the age group matching their CDA
- Recommend the teacher for renewal

Examples of EC Professional Organizations:

- NAEYC- National Association for the Education of Young Children
- MIAEYC- Michigan Association for the Education of Young Children
- National Head Start

The T.E.A.C.H. scholarship can cover the renewal fee of \$125.

Some Professional Organizations offer group memberships, look for these options for cost savings.

Additional Keys to Success



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This page contains suggestions that we have seen make a difference in teachers successfully completing the CDA and experiencing increased confidence in the classroom. We understand all child care settings are unique so it makes sense to shape these ideas to what works in your setting. If you would like support applying these ideas to your program, please contact us at Child Care Network.

Empathetic Encouragement

- Knowing what your teachers are experiencing as they work through the multi-step CDA process will be a great help to them. Consider recognizing the hard work of your staff who are working on credentials at your staff meetings.
- Help teachers to request parent feedback. This is a great opportunity to teach your staff how to process feedback and respond appropriately. Set aside time to discuss how they feel about the parent feedback they receive. Share how you or lead teachers in the program collect, use, and respond to parent feedback.

Experience Builds Confidence

- If you have a teacher working on their CDA who does not seem to have much confidence in the classroom, it is important to help them get opportunities to shadow lead teachers and ask questions about how to guide the class. This will help them prepare for the Verification Visit and make them a more independent lead teacher after they complete the CDA credential.

Consider Compensation

- The CDA process is very time consuming. If it is possible to provide staff with paid work time to work on the CDA requirements, it can enable them to complete the CDA requirements more quickly and feel more prepared for the exam and verification visit.

Useful Links



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CDA Links

- Homepage:
<https://www.cdacouncil.org/en/educator-pathways/>
 - Orders:
https://yourcouncil.org/cfprssa/ecssashop.show_home_category?
 - Locating a PD Specialist in Michigan:
<https://miaeyc.elevate.commpartners.com/connectionboard>
-

T.E.A.C.H. Links

- Link to Info about T.E.A.C.H.:
<https://www.miaeyc.org/pdspecialist/cda-assessment-scholarship/>
 - T.E.A.C.H. Application: <https://www.miaeyc.org/professional-development/t-e-a-c-h-scholarships/how-to-apply/>
-

Training Hours and CDA Classes


- If your child care setting is in the Southeastern Resource Center Region, contact us at Child Care Network to see if a CDA cohort is available. <https://www.childcarenetwork.org/contact-us>
- Teachstone - <https://teachstone.com/cda-programs/>
- Quorum-<https://teachingstrategies-s.mlearning.com/quorum-individual-membership.html>
- Care Courses -
<https://www.carecourses.com/publicpages/nationalcredential>
- MiAEYC College Credit Program Search -
<https://www.miaeyc.org/map/cda-training-colleges-for-college-credit/>





Child Care Network

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