

What is a CDA?

The CDA Credential is a nationally recognized early childhood professional credential. A person who has earned the CDA Credential is referred to as a CDA. A person who is working toward the CDA Credential is referred to as a candidate.

The CDA is a program of the National Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition, 2460 16th St. NW, Washington, DC 20009-3575. Information and materials may be obtained by calling 1-800-424-4310. The National Council sets all program requirements and awards all CDA Credentials. For local information on the CDA, contact your Child Care Resource and Referral agency.

To earn the CDA credential, a person must successfully complete the national assessment process. This process is based on the candidate's demonstrated ability to meet the specific needs of young children and their families, and to work with other adults in a professional capacity.

Typically, the CDA Credential is earned in one of three areas: Infant/Toddler, Preschool, or Family Child Care. Though less common, a credential may also be earned in Home Visiting.

The CDA Credential covers the age groups of 0-5 years. CDA does not address school-age development.

In North Dakota, according to Child Care Group Rule 75-03-09-10 and Center Rules 75-03-10-10 and 75-03-10-11.1, a CDA is qualified to be a supervisor in a licensed group child care or child care center. A CDA with at least one year of experience is qualified to be a child care center director.

In Minnesota, according to Child Care Center rule (Chapter 9503), a CDA is qualified to be an assistant teacher in a preschool or center setting. A CDA with 1560 hours of experience is qualified to be a preschool or center teacher.

Steps to Earn the CDA Credential

Before a person can begin the CDA process, they must have a high school diploma or GED and be at least 18 years of age.

The CDA process can be divided into three sections. Sections must be completed in order.

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<p>Section 1</p> <p>Candidate completes 120 hours of formal training in a setting approved by the National Council <i>(Training must be completed within 5 years of national assessment)</i></p> <p>Candidate documents 480 hours of direct work experience with children in a state approved, licensed child care facility <i>(Work experience must be documented within 5 years of national assessment)</i></p> <p>Candidate works with an qualified early childhood advisor to complete the national CDA assessment observation <i>(Observation must be completed within 6 months of national assessment)</i></p> <p>Candidate surveys the parents of the children in his/her care, using the official CDA survey forms. 75% response is required. <i>(Surveys must be completed within 6 months of national assessment)</i></p> <p>Candidate compiles a Professional Resource File, in compliance with the national CDA requirements. This includes an autobiography, six statements of competence in specific areas, and a collection of 17 specific resources.</p>	<p>Section 2</p> <p>Candidate files for national assessment, using the Direct Assessment Application form provided by the National Council.</p> <p>A fee of \$325.00 must be submitted with the application form.</p> <p>At the national level, assessment applications are processed quarterly, on March 1, June 1, September 1, and December 1.</p>	<p>Section 3</p> <p>A representative of the National Council contacts the candidate, usually within 3 months after the Direct Assessment application has been submitted.</p> <p>The representative schedules an assessment visit with the candidate.</p> <p>At the visit, the candidate takes a written and an oral exam.</p> <p>The representative reviews the Professional Resource File and collects the following from the candidate: Advisor Observation Parent Surveys Copies of the candidate's autobiography and competency statements</p> <p>This information is sent to the National Council where it is reviewed by a committee. The committee determines whether or not to award the credential.</p>
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CDA Training Requirements

CDA candidates are required to complete 120 hours of formal training or education within five years of national assessment. CDA training may be taken for credit or non-credit. Training must be completed at an approved institution/agency or through a combination of approved sources. Approved institutions and agencies include Child Care Resource and Referral agencies, Head Start, United States military, accredited colleges and universities, or technical schools.

CDA candidates are required to have a minimum of ten hours of training in each of the following topic areas:

- Planning a safe, healthy, learning environment

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- Ways to advance children's intellectual and physical development
- Ways to support children's social and emotional development
- Strategies to establish productive relationships with families
- Strategies to manage an effective program
- Professionalism
- Observing and recording children's behavior
- Principles of children's growth and development

CDA Work Experience

CDA candidates are required to complete 480 hours of work experience within five years of national assessment. Work experience means work directly with children 0-5 years, in a licensed, state-approved child care setting. Candidates must document this experience with time sheets signed by the program director, tax forms, or other official documentation.

CDA Advisor Requirements

CDA advisors may qualify in one of three ways, all of which require a combination of education and experience in early childhood. For details of advisor eligibility requirements, refer to the national materials available from the National Council. Advisors are required to observe the candidate for a minimum of three hours and to complete the national observation instrument, also available from the National Council. The advisor signs, dates, and seals the observation, signs the Direct Assessment Application form, and returns these materials to the candidate.

CDA Professional Resource File Requirements

CDA candidates complete an extensive Professional Resource File. Details of file requirements are included in the national materials.

Candidates write an autobiography and six statements of competence, one in each of the six CDA Competency Areas. Competency Areas are further broken down into thirteen Functional Areas, as indicated in parentheses. These are:

1. To establish and maintain a safe, healthy, learning environment
(Safe, Healthy, Learning)
2. To advance physical and intellectual competence
(Physical, Intellectual, Creative, Communication)
3. To support social and emotional development and to provide positive guidance
(Social, Self, Guidance)
4. To establish positive and productive relationships with families
(Families)
5. To ensure a well-run, purposeful program responsive to participants needs
(Program Management)

6. To maintain a commitment to professionalism
(Professionalism)

Candidates also gather 17 specific resources and assemble the statements and resources into a professional-looking, useful file.

CDA Time Table

The CDA assessment process can be described in one word - LONG. Most candidates are frustrated by the amount of time spent waiting for information from the National Council. Candidates invest a great deal of time in completing the first section of the assessment process, described on the previous page. They are anxious to move ahead with the process. However, after the candidate files the Direct Assessment Application form, they may wait as long as three months before being contacted by the national representative. After the assessment visit with the national representative, the candidate may wait an additional three months before receiving notification of the National Council's decision. Typically, from beginning to end, the CDA process takes a minimum of one year.

CDA Costs

There are certain fixed costs in the CDA process. The packet of materials from the National Council costs \$17.75. The national assessment fee is \$325.00. These costs cannot be changed. Variations may occur in the cost of training (typically about \$8/hour, for a total of \$960 for 120 hours of training), advisor (typically between \$200-\$400), and technical support or supervision (varies depending on number of hours).

CDA Renewal

The CDA Credential is first awarded for a three-year period and then for five-year periods every time thereafter. To renew, a CDA must have taken a 3-credit college class or CEU-based classes to total 4.5 CEU within the renewal period. CEUs must be awarded by an accredited institution and are usually offered at additional charge. 1 CEU credit requires 10 clock hours of training. Contact the National CDA Council for a renewal packet and additional information.