

So, you sent your Direct Assessment Application form — along with documentation of your 120 hours of training and a check for \$325 — to the national CDA Council. And now, you're wondering how long it will be before the national CDA Council representative calls to set up your assessment visit. Or perhaps, your assessment visit has been scheduled and you're wondering what to expect. Here are some tips to survive the wait and the assessment visit.

1. Don't panic if it seems like a long time before the national CDA Council representative calls to set up an appointment. It might be anywhere from two to four months, depending on how close to one of the quarterly application dates you mailed in your application materials.
2. If you have waited more than three months from the time you file for assessment, call the National Council and ask how soon you can expect to be assessed. The phone number is 1-800-424-4310. When you talk to the Council, always record the time, date, and name of the person you talked to, in case you have to call back. With other questions or concerns, call Ellen at 1-800-941-7003 or call directly at 218-299-7018.
3. When the Council representative calls to set up your assessment visit, she will ask you to verify that you have completed all the requirements of the program. Usually, she will ask you to find a place where the two of you can meet and she will ask you to think about several possible dates and times. She will then call you back in a few days to finalize when and where you will meet. If your contact information changes after you send in your Direct Assessment application, be sure to call the national CDA Council to update your file. Otherwise, the Council representative will not be able to find you to set up an appointment.



4. You may be responsible for arranging a meeting place. Pick a place that is neutral— do NOT have the representative come to your work place or your home. It is also better to avoid public places where noise could distract you as you take the written and oral exams. Some suggestions for meeting places are the Public Library, a meeting room at a church, or the community room at your local City Hall.
5. As soon as you know the date and time of your assessment meeting, get out your Resource File and go over it to be absolutely certain you have all the necessary pieces. This includes:
  - Formal observation in a sealed envelope
  - Parent surveys in a sealed envelope (remember, you must have 75% return)
  - A clean copy of your autobiography and all your competency statements for the representative to take with her. Make sure these are very professional looking,



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with no spelling errors, spots or rips, or other unprofessional mistakes. You will also need to have clean copies of these documents filed in your Professional Resource File.

- The 17 required resources, as described in your book from the national CDA Council
- Documentation of your training (at least 120 hours) and work experience (at least 480 hours)



Look at your Resource File with a critical eye – does it look as nice as it can? Do you think it represents you in your best and most professional light? Is each piece clearly labeled with the Competency Goal, Functional Area, resource number, and your name? Is the entire Resource File easy to use? If you are not entirely satisfied with your Resource File, now is the time to make any last minute adjustments. Remember, this is one of the only ways the national CDA Council will be able to judge your suitability to become a CDA, so make sure your Resource File is outstanding.

6. Before your assessment meeting, review all your CDA training material to refresh your memory about safe and healthy environments, child development and good teaching practices. Be sure you understand commonly used terms, such as “developmentally appropriate,” “open-ended questions,” “guidance versus punishment,” and “process versus product.” Be able to use these terms and to explain what these terms mean for your work with children.

7. Allow at least 2 hours for the assessment visit. Do NOT bring children to the meeting. Dress in comfortable yet professional clothing – be clean, tidy, and well groomed. Present yourself as a confident, capable early childhood professional.

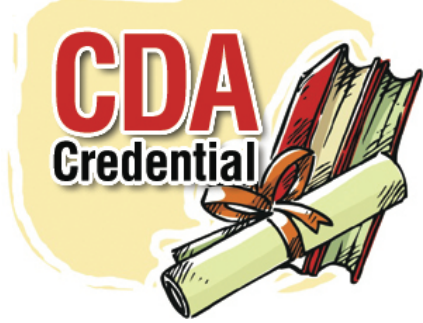


8. Okay!!! The big day is here. It's time to meet the national Council Representative. Take a deep breath; calm yourself. **You can do this.** You know a lot about working with children and you CAN answer the questions the representative will ask you. All your careful training and study have prepared you for this moment. Be sure to arrive a few minutes ahead of your scheduled appointment time so you don't feel rushed or overwhelmed. Take a few deep, calming breaths and remind yourself that you know what you're doing.



Here's what is likely to happen: a very nice person will greet you and explain the process. You'll chat for a few minutes and then you will take the written test (60 multiple choice questions) while the representative goes over your Resource File. When you have completed the written test, she will test your knowledge with an oral interview. She will show you some pictures and/or read you some scenarios, and ask you to tell her what you think about the situation. When the interview is finished, she will collect your observation, parent surveys, copies of your autobiography and competency statements. However, she will return your Resource File to you. She will not indicate

to you whether you “passed.” That is not her job, so don’t worry if she doesn’t say anything about how you did.

9. The representative will send your materials to the national CDA Council, where a group will review it and decide whether or not to award the CDA Credential. If you pass, you will open your mail box one day several months after your assessment visit to find your beautiful new CDA Credential. Get a frame and hang your Credential where everyone can see it! Send the press notice that will be included with your CDA Credential to your local newspaper. After all, you’ve just earned a nationally recognized early childhood professional credential and that’s worth celebrating.
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10. Once the excitement settles down, remember that the CDA Credential is renewable. You have 3 years from the first date you received your CDA Credential or 5 years every time you renew your CDA Credential to meet the renewal requirements. These include 4.5 CEUs of training or a 3-semester credit college course in early childhood/child development training that applies to children 0-5 years of age. NOTE: A CEU means a Continuing Education Unit and is available for some training that meets standards for both training content and trainer qualifications. Typically, one CEU equals ten clock hours of approved training, so that means that 4.5 CEUs is 45 clock hours of training. It’s important to start getting your CEUs immediately after receiving your CDA Credential. Many people prefer to take a college course to meet the renewal requirements.
  11. Finally, you’ve probably wondered what happens if you DON’T pass the national CDA Direct Assessment exam. Be assured that is a very rare occurrence and is extremely unlikely to happen if you’ve carefully fulfilled the national CDA requirements and really worked to incorporate the concepts of developmentally appropriate practices in your program. But, sometimes it does happen. If after reviewing all your CDA materials (exams, parent surveys, observation, competency statements, etc), the national CDA Council thinks you need to increase your knowledge and skill in working with young children, they will let you know what you can do. It is not the end of the world—it just means that you need to attend some additional training and work to better implement good practices into your interactions with children and families.