

WELCOME: AN INTRODUCTION

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Welcome!

Welcome!

Considering professional development towards a CDA credential is an exciting step! The CDA: Get Started resource is designed to help you understand and plan what is needed to obtain a CDA credential.

The CDA credential is a national credential issued only by the Council for Professional Recognition. The purpose of the CDA program and credential is to enhance the quality of early care and education by defining, evaluating, and recognizing competence, based on the training and performance of the child care professional.

Understanding the many steps towards a CDA credential takes time. The CDA: Get Started resource has four sections, along with the Welcome section, developed to follow the steps in the CDA Process. Each section will provide careful, detailed information to help you work towards obtaining your CDA credential.

As with any CDA work, it is important to stay in communication with the Council for Professional Recognition. Be sure you visit the Council's web site at <http://cdacouncil.org/> or call 800-424-4310 with your CDA questions.

The Penn State Better Kid Care Program offers professional development training hours and is committed to mentoring CDA applicants who use these materials. If after reading this resource you have more CDA questions, contact the BKC office at:

Penn State Better Kid Care
www.betterkidcare.psu.edu
1-800-452-9108

We Care... You Care

Before you start...

WHY GET A CDA CREDENTIAL?

Providing early care and education for children is important work: It is a profession. Studies show that well-educated, skilled early caregivers are the basis for offering quality early learning and care programs. The CDA credential is a nationally recognized credential that recognizes the knowledge and skill base to meet the developmental needs of young children. The CDA process can be a catalyst to your professional growth in a career in early childhood.

HOW MUCH DOES GETTING A CDA COST?

There are three basic fees you will encounter when obtaining a CDA credential:

1. The CDA application packet fee, which is around \$25 (2011).
2. The professional development fee for the 120 hours of formal education in early childhood. This fee varies due to the wide variety of CDA training programs and scholarships available. Penn State Better Kid Care fees are discussed in detail in Phase Three.
3. The Final Assessment Fee/Direct Application fee is \$325 payable to the Council for Professional Recognition (2011).

ARE THERE ANY SCHOLARSHIPS FOR CDA?

Financial assistance for individuals to obtain a CDA Credential may be available in your state. Funding may also be available for training fees, the assessment fee, and other costs of earning or renewing the CDA Credential. View the Council's list of scholarship information by state here <http://cdacouncil.org/the-resource-center/cda-scholarships>

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For funding information in Pennsylvania, contact:

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood PENNSYLVANIA Scholarship Program
2300 Vartan Way, Suite 270
Harrisburg, PA 17110
877-51 TEACH (83224)
(717) 657-9000
Fax: (717) 657-9000
E-mail: info@pacca.org
Web site: www.pacca.org/teach

The Pennsylvania Keys to Quality Professional Development
Vouchers: College Tuition Reimbursement and CDA Assessment Fee
C/o BCIU
P.O. Box 16050
Reading, PA 19612-6050
800-284-6031
Email - PAKeyVoucherProgram@berksiu.org
Web site: www.pakeys.org

IS THE CDA CREDENTIAL THE SAME AS AN EARLY CHILDHOOD ASSOCIATE DEGREE?

No, the CDA is a credential, not a degree. View the PA Career Lattice to learn more about credentials and degrees and to plan educational pathways according to the position that you interested in attaining. Go to the PA Keys to Quality web site <http://www.pakeys.org/> and search “career development” .

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO GET A CDA CREDENTIAL?

This can vary depending on the CDA program and the CDA applicant. In general, it takes about a year to obtain a CDA credential, but can be longer or shorter. From the date you apply for the CDA credential, you can go back five years to count training toward your educational requirements.

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WHAT WILL I NEED BEFORE I BEGIN?

If you choose Penn State Better Kid Care as your professional development source, you will need to read this entire CDA Get Started resource and also have a CDA Application packet.

You will need to have a computer, Internet access, basic computer skills, writing skills, and an eagerness to learn and work hard. Self motivation, independent work, and organizational skills play a key role in obtaining a CDA credential.

You will eventually need:

- Large notebook, such as a two-four inch notebook (one with an insert cover on the front)
- Page protector covers
- Three-ring page dividers with tabs
- Small and medium plain, self-adhesive labels
- Pocket file folders to organize your Professional Resource File/ Collection of Documentation materials

It is a good idea to also have a calendar, pens/pencils, paper, extra folders and a designated place to store these for easy access. *The Collection of Documentation is discussed in detail in Phase three.

Before you begin the CDA process, it's important to build relationships with other early educators or mentors. You may need someone to talk with, receive direction from, or share ideas with. Take time to talk with your program director, other early educators, or mentors about your plans to obtain a CDA credential.

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CDA Note:

Make a list of names and contacts for programs and individuals you may use as a reference in the CDA process, such as The Council for Professional Recognition, Better Kid Care, and your Director. Post or keep these near your CDA materials for easy access.

BE FAMILIAR WITH THE CDA PROCESS

You will need to have a basic understanding of the CDA Process. There are six stages in the CDA process:

1. Inquiry: 120 hours of professional early childhood education to be completed before you apply for CDA credential
2. Collection of Documentation: Professional Resource file to be completed up to six months before you apply
3. Application: to be completed after inquiry and collection of documentation
4. Verification Visit: Final Assessment
5. Credential Award
6. Credential Renewal

CDA Eligibility Requirements

DETERMINE YOUR ELIGIBILITY

The Council for Professional Recognitions states: “Candidates seeking to apply for the CDA credential must meet the following eligibility requirements”:

- Must hold a high school diploma, or equivalent, or must be a junior or senior in a high school vocational program in early education.
- Experience: Have 480 hours of experience working with young children within the last five years
- Be able to speak, read, and write well enough to fulfill the responsibilities of a CDA candidate
- Education/Training Requirement: Have 120 clock hours of formal child care education within the past five years and fulfill all the requirements stated in the CDA application packet

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CDA Settings

DESIGNATE YOUR CDA SETTING

A CDA setting is the type of child care program in which a CDA Candidate's performance is evaluated. An applicant for a CDA credential chooses one setting: Center Based Preschool, Center Based Infant Toddler, Family Child Care, Home Visitor, or Bilingual.

You will need to know your setting before ordering your CDA application packet from the Council and before you plan your CDA professional development. The CDA Competency Standards (criteria that define goals and skills for the CDA candidate), eligibility requirements, and information collection responsibilities are slightly different for each setting.

“All Candidates must also be able to identify an appropriate setting where they can be observed working as the lead caregiver. Note: Candidates may be employed or work on a volunteer basis in the child care setting.” –The Council for Professional Recognition 2011

The following settings are outlined by the Council for Professional Recognition:

SETTINGS FOR CDA:

Center Based Preschool Setting

Center Based Preschool Setting is a state-approved child development center where a Candidate can be observed working with a group of at least eight children, all of whom are aged 3 through 5 years. In addition, a center-based program must have: (1) at least 10 children enrolled in the program (not necessarily in the Candidate's group), and (2) at least two caregivers working with the children on a regular basis.

Center Based Infant Toddler Setting

Center Based Infant Toddler Setting is a state-approved child development center where a Candidate can be observed working with a group of at least three children, all of whom are under age 3. In

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addition, a center-based program must have: (1) at least 10 children enrolled in the program (not necessarily the Candidate's group), and (2) at least two caregivers working with the children on a regular basis.

Family Child Care Setting

Family Child Care Setting is a family child care home where a Candidate can be observed working with at least two children 5 years old or younger who are not related to the Candidate by blood or marriage. The setting must meet at least the minimum level of applicable state and/or local regulations. Family child care settings are also eligible in localities where there is no regulation of family child care.

Home Visitor Setting

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

Bilingual Setting

Bilingual Setting is a child development program that has specific goals for achieving bilingual development in children; where two languages are consistently used in daily activities; and where parents are helped to understand the goals and to support children's bilingual development.

SECOND SETTING CDA CREDENTIAL

For CDAs who hold one credential and wish to obtain a second CDA Credential in a different setting, the Council offers the Second Setting CDA Credential. It is available to center-based and family child care CDAs who received their Credential under the revised direct assessment procedures on or after January 1, 1993. The Council maintains a toll-free hotline to answer questions and to provide assistance. Call 800-424-4310. The Council also provides an on-line support link which can be found on the Council's website <http://cdacouncil.org/help-desk/chat-online-with-support-staff#> (click the Chat Online button).

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CDA Application Packet

The CDA Application packet is a valuable resource in understanding the CDA training requirements and is essential in preparing for the CDA credential. The CDA Application packet can be ordered from the Council for Professional Recognition for around \$25 (this includes shipping and handling, 2011). Visit the Council of Professional Recognition's on-line bookstore at <http://store.cdacouncil.org/> or call 800-424-4310 to order.

The application packet comes with:

- CDA Assessment System and Competency Standards booklet (Each CDA setting has a represented Assessment Systems and Competency Standards book and is designated by color. Family Child Care is blue, Center-Based Preschool is green, and Center-Based Infant/Toddler is yellow.)

Be aware of the CDA Council's revised 3rd editions (2010, 2011) for the CDA Assessment System and Competency Standards books.

- CDA application (Direct Assessment Application)
- Parent questionnaires
- CDA Assessment Observation Instrument

WHAT IS A WAIVER REQUEST FORM?

The Council will consider waiving certain eligibility requirements if the candidate provides a written explanation, along with documentation that supports the request. The Waiver Request must be submitted to the Council before you apply for the CDA credential. A Waiver request form is in the CDA Assessment System and Competency Standards book and is available on the Council's web site at http://cdacouncil.org/storage/documents/Downloadable_Forms/Waiver_Request_Form.pdf

If you want to know more about the Waiver process, contact the Council at 800-424-4310.

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BE A RESPONSIBLE CDA CANDIDATE

A responsible CDA Candidate is one who is independently guiding and reflecting on their CDA process.

“Becoming a CDA is a process that you work at, learn, and nurture until it grows from within. It is a process by which you grow as an individual and as a professional”

— The Council of Professional Recognition, 2011

WHAT IF I NEED HELP?

The Better Kid Care Program is committed to mentoring CDA applicants who are using the Better Kid Care Distance Education lessons for their CDA training process (Inquiry). Call 800-452-9108 and ask for CDA help. Visit also the CDA Information <http://betterkidcare.psu.edu/Page15.html> on the Better Kid Care web site www.betterkidcare.psu.edu.

The Council for Professional Recognition has a toll free number to answer CDA questions at 800-424-4310 and also provides an on-line support link which can be found on the Council’s website <http://cdacouncil.org/help-desk/chat-online-with-support-staff#> (click the Chat Online button).

SHARE YOUR CDA GOALS

Once you have committed to working towards the CDA credential, it is a good idea to let others know, especially those who are close to your work and personal life. Doing so not only shares your professional goals, but will allow others to see your hard work and be available for support. Parents of the children you work with will have the opportunity to be involved in the CDA process by filling out a CDA Parent Opinion Questionnaire (see Phase Three for more information on Parent Questionnaires). If you work with a Director, they can offer substantial support and should be aware of your CDA process.

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CDA Note:

The CDA Applicant is responsible for setting goals and completing all the CDA training requirements as outlined by the Council for Professional Recognition.

CDA: Quick Breakdown

- Become familiar with the history of the Council for Professional Recognition and the CDA credential
- Meet CDA eligibility requirements
- Order CDA Application packet (in chosen CDA setting)
- Select and locate a CDA training program and a CDA Advisor
- Complete the Inquiry stage;
120 hours of early childhood education
- Assemble the Collection of Documentation/
Professional Resource File
- Complete the Formal CDA Observation
- Prepare Direct Assessment Application
- Prepare for Verification Visit (Final Assessment)
- Receive CDA Credential
- Celebrate!
- Prepare for CDA Renewal

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CDA Note:

Become familiar with the CDA on-line application (for the original CDA credential and CDA Renewal) at YourCDA <http://www.cdacouncil.org/yourcda>

Penn State **Extension**

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extension.psu.edu

www.betterkidcare.psu.edu

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