



**HIPPYUSA®**  
Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters

# **CDA 101**

## **Home Visitor Guide**

### **Leading to Educational Advancement Pathway (LEAP)**

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# Introduction

It is our hope that this document provides helpful introduction to the CDA application process. The flexible nature of the CDA credential means that there are several ways to obtain the certification; this guide is meant to walk you through how to get either a Center-based Preschool CDA or the Home Visitor CDA.

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# Part 1: General Information

## What is the Child Development Associate Credential (CDA)?

The **Child Development Associate Credential (CDA)** is a nationally recognized entry level credential in the field of Early Childhood Education. It is issued by the **Council for Professional Recognition**. The CDA is designed for those individuals who are working with young children in all settings. The purpose of this credential is to prepare individuals to meet the specific needs of children and work with parents and other adults to nurture children's physical, social, emotional and intellectual growth in a child development framework.

## Why is the CDA useful?

Many employers in the early childhood education and care field require candidates without a degree in early education to hold a CDA certificate. If the candidate does not have a CDA, some employers require the candidate to earn one during the first few years of employment. The CDA Credential has many advantages; including providing documented continuing education for staff and providing a platform for professional and career opportunities for recipients. Many view the CDA Credential as an instrument for career advancement in the early childhood care and education profession. The Council for Professional Recognition works to ensure that the CDA is a credible and valid credential recognized by the profession as a vital part of a coordinated system of professional development.

## Is there more than one type of CDA?

Yes, there is more than one type of CDA. Each CDA certificate is developed around a certain type of childcare provider, though it seems the most universally applicable certificate is that of the preschool CDA. Each certificate has slightly different requirements and costs, all of which are outlined on the [CDA website](#) or in the CDA competency standards. The four types of CDA are: **Preschool, Infant/Toddler, Family Childcare and Home Visitor**. The CDA can also be completed in English, Spanish or with a bilingual specialization.

## What Are the General Requirements for a CDA?

- 1) The candidate must have a high school diploma or be a junior or senior in a high school career / technical program in early education.
- 2) The candidate must have 480 hours of experience working with young children. The nature of the work experience depends on the credential being pursued.
- 3) The candidate must have 120 clock hours of formal training.
- 4) Collect specific documentation that shows evidence of practice working with young children.

# Part 2: Guide to the Home Visitor CDA

The Council for Professional Recognition has several guides and [web](#) pages dedicated to explaining the CDA requirements and application process. It is a good idea to refer to those frequently, as they will reflect the most up-to-date information. You will also be required to buy the [CDA Competency Standards](#) book in order to complete the application. This book details all necessary components and timelines to receive the certification.

The home visitor CDA is available as either an English or bilingual Spanish certification. The bilingual certification has several more requirements than the English certification, so be sure to pay close attention to the [CDA Competency Standards](#) booklet. You must work in a bilingual program if you wish to be eligible for the bilingual CDA certification.

## **Step 1: Meet Eligibility Requirements**

### **120 hours of Professional Education**

Candidates must have completed 120 hours of formal child care education within the past five years, with a minimum of ten hours of content in each of the following [eight content](#) areas:

1. Plan a safe, healthy environment to invite learning
2. Steps to advance children's physical and intellectual development
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 development and learning

The education hours must be completed under the sponsorship and guidance of an agency or organization with expertise in early childhood teacher preparation. The agency or organization must provide verification of your education in the form of an official transcript, certificate or letter. You need to submit these documents with your application. There are several ways to meet the 120 hours of professional education requirement, but it is our recommendation that home visitors go through an accredited nonprofit college, preferably for college credit. HIPPIY USA has developed a detailed guide on how to apply to colleges that you can obtain from your

program coordinator. There are several reasons for this recommendation that will be presented in bullet points below, if, however, you believe the college credit option is not for you, we still highly recommend that you use a nonprofit career center or community college option. Your professional education must be completed within five years of your application.

You will also need to complete First Aid/Pediatric CPR training in order to pass an important part of your CDA site visit.

The benefits of the non-profit college credit option:

- 1) **Financial Aid.** Pell grants and other state, federal, college-based, and private scholarships can be used to pay for CDA training if you apply to a college as if you are planning to receive an associate's degree. This is a very common practice. There is no penalty for applying to a college if you are seeking a degree in order to qualify for financial aid, unless you sign a document saying otherwise.
- 2) **You can use these credits to finish a degree in the future.** This is useful if you want to eventually become a program coordinator or continue your education in the future
- 3) **Cost effective.** The training you need for this program will only cost a few hundred dollars more than the non-credit option, which when you consider the permanent resume benefits of college credit, is important.
- 4) **College Courses do not have to be renewed.** Credentials like the CDA must be renewed every few years, but college credits do not expire.

### **480 hours of Professional Experience**

Candidates must have at least 480 hours experience within the last five years working with children (birth to five) in a home visiting program. This experience may be professional or volunteer. A CDA candidate must demonstrate competence in her/his ability to meet the CDA Competency Goals through her/his work in a center-based environment. The competency goals are:

1. To establish and maintain a safe, healthy learning environment
2. To advance physical and intellectual competence
3. To support social and emotional development and to provide positive guidance
4. To establish positive and productive relationships with families
5. To ensure a well-run purposeful program responsive to participant needs
6. To maintain a commitment to professionalism.

## **Step 2: Form The Local Assessment Team (LAT)**

You must get permission and support from your supervisor and families, as you will be having individuals come and view your work with children in the home. The exact requirements for the advisor and parent/community representative are outlined in the competency standards.

To form your Local Assessment Team you will need to secure:

- 1) An Advisor
  - a. This person is responsible for observing you work with families and assist you with documenting your skills
- 2) Parent/Community Representative
  - a. This person is responsible for observing you work with families and assist you with documenting your skills

## **Observation**

Within six months of applying, your Advisor and Parent/Community Representative must observe you work with two families.

### **Observation requirements**

- 1) The families must be part of your normal caseload
- 2) Your Advisor and Parent/Community Representative cannot observe you at the same time
- 3) You must provide your Local Assessment Team with the 'Report' booklets that came with your [CDA Competency Standards](#) book before scheduling your observations.
- 4) Caseload families must agree to the observations ahead of time and you should explain to them that they will have to sign an observation permission form whenever a Local Assessment Team member accompanies you.

### **Observation Procedure**

Both the Advisor and Parent/Community Representative will

- 1) Have families sign the Observation Permission Form
- 2) Will observe you working with two families where the children are 5 years old or younger
- 3) Observe you for 1.5 consecutive hours for each visit
- 4) Will sign your CDA Home Visitor Assessment Application

In addition, the Advisor will:

- 1) Will record observations in the Advisor Report about your behavior in relation to the 13 Functional Areas as seen in the Appendix
- 2) Will interview you about Functional Area 12: Program Management and Functional Area 13: Professionalism

In addition, the Parent/Community Representative will:

- 1) Record their observation in the Parent/Community Representative Report

## **Step 3: Prepare Resource File**

At least six months before applying for your CDA credential, you must prepare a resource file. A resource file is like a portfolio and its mandatory requirements are outlined in the [CDA Competency Standards](#) book. A brief summary of included items is listed below.

Your Professional Resource File includes:

- **A 300 word autobiography**
- **Six statements of competency.** Each statement should demonstrate your ability to work with families in the [13 Functional Areas](#). For help in organizing your Professional Resource File, see the “How to Compile Your Professional Resource File” document at [www.ndchildcare.org](http://www.ndchildcare.org).
- **17 item resource collection of certificates** proving your accomplishments and functioning knowledge of the [thirteen functional](#) areas (see appendix). A detailed list can be found in your [CDA Competency Standards](#) book. Examples include CPR certification certificate and sample activities you do with children.
- **Parent questionnaires.** These questionnaires are found in the [CDA Competency Standards](#) book and must be returned in sealed envelopes. You will give these to the parent/community representative before the Local Assessment Team meeting.

## **Step 4: Submit Application**

Fill out and mail the paper application to the Council for Professional Recognition. Along with the paper application, you will need to submit your assessment fee and documentation of your professional education. It is best to make a copy for your own records.

- Mail in application, assessment fee and professional education documentation
- Make a copy for your records.

## **Step 5: Final Observation & LAT Meeting**

Once your application has been reviewed and approved by the Council for Professional Recognition, you will have a council representative assigned to you. The council representative will contact you and your Local Assment Team (LAT) and supervisor to schedule two final observations and the LAT meeting.

Observation with council representative

- Have parents sign the observation permission form
- Must occur with two families with children that are five years old or younger
- Each observation will take 1.5 hours

### Interview

- The interview will be 1.5 hours
- You will be asked 10 questions from the Council Representative Report

### Local Assessment Team (LAT) Meeting

- You will have to locate a local venue to hold the LAT meeting, such as a private room at a local library.
- Each team member is responsible for bringing certain materials
  - The CDA Candidate
    - Professional Resource File
  - Parent/Community Representative
    - Parent/Community Representative Report
    - Parent Questionnaires
  - Advisor
    - Advisor Report
  - Council Representative
    - Council Representative Report

Once everyone has assembled, the council representative will review the collected information and ensure that all needed items are present. The council representative will read the definition of each [functional area](#) to the group and each team member will vote on whether the CDA candidate meets competency standards or needs more trainings. After each area has been voted on, each team member must make a recommendation on whether the candidate needs more training or should be awarded the CDA credential. To be awarded the credential the team must vote unanimously to award the credential.

## **Step 6: Be Awarded the Credential**

Once the LAT meeting has concluded, the team's evaluation materials will be collected by the council representative and will be mailed to the Council for Professional Recognition's main office. If the Council for Professional Recognition's review committee finds that all documents and procedures are in good standing, they will accept the Local Assessment Team's recommendation to certify the applicant. If issues arise, the applicant can make appeals.



# Home Visitor CDA Checklist

- ☐ Obtain the [CDA Competency Standards](#) book
- ☐ **Complete 120 Hours of Approved Training.** Training must be earned through an institution, agency or setting approved by the Council for Professional Recognition.
  - Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ **Complete 480 Hours of Work Experience.** A candidate must be working directly with children birth to 5. Work experience must occur within three years prior to submitting your CDA Credential Application.
  - Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ **Create Local Assessment Team.** You must select an Advisor and Parent/Community Representative who will observe and guide you through the CDA application process.
  - Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ **Complete Two Advisor Observations.** You must have your Advisor observe and document your interactions with two families. Each observation must last 1.5 hours
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Observation Date: \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Observation Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ **Complete two Parent/Community Representative Observations.** You must have your Parent/Community Representative observe and document your interactions with two families. Each observation must last 1.5 hours.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Observation Date: \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Observation Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ **Create a Professional Resource File.** Candidates are required to put together a Professional Resource File that includes six statements of competence, a resource collection and a 300-word autobiography. This must be completed within six months prior to applying for CDA Credentialing.
  - Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ **Distribute and Collect Parent Opinion Questionnaires.** Candidates must complete this step within six months prior to submitting CDA Application.
  - Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ **Apply for CDA Credentialing.** A candidate can apply for national CDA Credentialing once they have completed the prerequisites. A \$425 application fee must be submitted with the application. Once accepted and processed, the candidate will receive information to schedule the final observation.
- ☐ **Complete the Final Observation.** A Council representative will be assigned to observe you work with two families. Each observation will last 1.5 hours.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Observation Date: \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Observation Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ **Interview.** Once you complete your two Council Representative observations, the Council Representative will conduct a 1.5 hour long interview with you covering 10 questions from the Council Representative Report.
  - Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ **LAT Meeting.** Your Local Assessment Team will meet with Council Representative to review documentation and vote on your eligibility to obtain the CDA credential.
  - ☐ LAT Meeting. Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ **Earn the CDA Credential**

# Appendix: The Thirteen Functional Areas

## To establish and maintain a safe, healthy learning environment

1. **Safe:** Student provides a safe environment to prevent and reduce injuries.
2. **Healthy:** Student promotes good health and nutrition and provides an environment that contributes to the prevention of illness.
3. **Learning Environment:** Student uses space, relationships, materials and routines as resources for constructing an interesting, secure and enjoyable environment that encourages play, exploration and learning.

## To advance physical and intellectual competence

4. **Physical:** Student provides a variety of equipment, activities and opportunities to promote physical development of children.
5. **Cognitive:** Student provides activities and opportunities that encourage curiosity, exploration and problem solving appropriate to the development levels and learning styles of children.
6. **Communication:** Student actively communicates with children and provides opportunities and support for student to understand, acquire and use verbal and nonverbal means of communicating thoughts and feelings.
7. **Creative:** Student provides opportunities that stimulate children to play with sound, rhythm, language, materials, space and ideas in individual ways and to express their creative abilities.

## To support social and emotional development and provide positive guidance

8. **Self:** Student provides physical and emotional security for each child and helps each child to know, accept and take pride in himself/herself and to express their creative abilities.
9. **Social:** Student helps each child feel accepted in the group, helps children learn to communicate and get along with others and encourages feelings of empathy and mutual respect among children and adults.
10. **Guidance:** Student provides a supportive environment in which children can begin to learn and practice appropriate and acceptable behaviors as individuals and as a group.

## To establish positive and productive relationships with families

11. **Families:** Student maintains an open, friendly and cooperative relationship with each child's family encourages their involvement in the program and supports the child's relationship with his or her family.

## To ensure a well-run, purposeful program responsive to participant needs

12. **Program Management:** Student is a manager who uses all available resources to ensure an effective operation. The student is a competent organizer, planner, record keeper, communicator and a cooperative coworker.

## To maintain a commitment to professionalism

13. **Professionalism:** Student makes decisions based on knowledge of early childhood theories and practices, promotes quality in child care services and takes advantage of opportunities to improve competence, both for personal and professional growth and for the benefit of children and families.