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Child Development Associate (CDA) Frequently Asked Questions

The Child Development Associate (CDA) is a credentialing program developed to provide opportunities for teachers and providers to demonstrate their abilities, skills, and understanding of early childhood development and instruction. Candidates are assessed through their preparation of multiple sources of evidence, which includes a professional portfolio, resources, and competency statements, as well as undergoing an observation and assessment.

This document is a series of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about the CDA before applying.

Q: I'm looking to get my CDA as a teacher. What qualifies as a "center-based setting"?

A: A center-based program must fulfill the following requirements:

- a) At least 10 children enrolled in the program; and
- b) At least 2 caregivers caring for children at any given time.

Q: Which CDA should I get?

A: The CDA is broken down into the following categories:

- a) *Infant/Toddler*: A center-based program where the CDA applicant can be observed by a PD specialist while working with at least 3 children under 3 years of age.
- b) *Preschool*: A center-based program where the CDA applicant can be observed by a PD specialist while working with at least 8 children at a time ranging from 3 to 5 years old.
- c) *Family Child Care*: A home-based program where the CDA applicant can be observed by a PD specialist working with a group of at least 2 children ranging from birth to 5 years old not directly related to the provider by blood or marriage. The setting must meet state or local minimum licensing regulations.





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Q: How much does the CDA cost?

A: Besides the cost of the 120-hour course requirement and the purchase of the competency standards book, the cost of the CDA application differs slightly depending on the method of application. The online application costs \$425 while a paper one costs \$500. The renewal application cost \$125 for the online and \$150 for a paper application. In both cases, payment is due in full at the time of application.

Q: What's the portfolio and what do I need for it?

A: All candidates applying for the CDA credential are required to put together a Professional Portfolio as part of their application. The portfolio is reviewed and evaluated by the PD Specialist during their PD visit to your center, called the CDA Verification Visit. The portfolio is made up of the following:

- Documentation of educational background and training certificates
- Completed Family Questionnaires
- Six Reflective Statements of Competence
- Ten Resources
- Professional Philosophy Statement

All of the portfolio components and required forms are included in the Competency Standards book, which is available for purchase on the CDA Council website.

Q: What is a PD Specialist and what do they do?

A: PD Specialists are individuals vetted by the CDA Council who use their expertise as early childhood educators and professionals to assess the competencies of CDA applicants. PD Specialists perform the CDA Verification Visit, in which they observe the applicant teach and interact with children, review the Professional Portfolio, and engage with the applicant in a reflective dialogue. The PD Specialist is required to submit the applicant's scores to the CDA Council.

Q: What do I need to do to become eligible for the CDA?

A: The initial requirement for every CDA application is a high school diploma or its equivalent; an alternative requirement is to be either a high school junior or senior currently enrolled in an early childhood or child development program. Also, before the application is submitted, you are required to complete the 120 hours of coursework. In





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the same time, within 6 months before submitting your application, you are to complete your Professional Portfolio. After submitting your application to the CDA Council, you are required within 3 years to complete a minimum of 480 hours of experience working with young children.

Q: Where can I get scholarships or financial aid?

A: Depending on your income, you may be eligible for scholarships and/or financial aid. Most states offer to cover the fees for the assessment, and organizations provide financial assistance. The CDA Council's CDA Scholarship page offers a full list of organizations for individuals wishing to apply for their CDA.

Q: I speak primarily Spanish. Where can I get materials that are in Spanish?

A: The CDA Council website offers materials translated into Spanish.

Q: I am bilingual. Does the CDA offer bilingual credentialing?

A: Yes. In order to qualify for bilingual specialization, CDA applicants are required to be fluent in speaking both languages, use both languages throughout the day, and must be working in a bilingual setting.

Q: I have a disability and require accommodations. Where can I request them?

A: Individuals with documented disabilities are required to complete and submit a Special Accommodations Request form, found on the CDA website, before submitting their CDA application.

For more information, please visit the CDA Council at <https://www.cdacouncil.org/en/>

