

What is the CDA Credential?

A *Child Development Associate Credential* is the credential an individual earns after having successfully completed the CDA process and an assessment by the Council for Professional Recognition, 2460 16th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20009-3575; (800) 424-4310; www.cdacouncil.org. The CDA Credential, a recognized part of the child care licensing/registration requirements in Iowa and across the country, is a way to earn points on the Iowa's Quality Rating System, and is a part of the process of achieving some accreditation standards. CDA Credentials have been awarded in our country since 1971 and over 200,000 credentials have been granted.

Hundreds of Iowans are seeking their CDA Credentials this year, as basic-level education or to enhance their skills. Some CDA candidates have associate or bachelor's degrees in a field other than early childhood education and are looking for an early childhood credential to meet some position or regulation requirement. Others are using the CDA process as a first taste of experiencing college, without the requirement of committing to a full degree program. Some are required to earn their CDA Credential because of the standards set by their employing program. Others use the CDA Credential to raise their level of professionalism for registration, licensing, Iowa's Quality Rating System, the Quality Preschool Program Standards, Head Start Standards, and NAEYC accreditation.

The recipient of a Child Development Associate Credential is able to meet the specific needs of children and works with parents and other adults to nurture children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual growth in a child development framework.

- A. **Competency goals:** The purpose of the CDA program is to enhance the quality of early care and education by defining, evaluating, and recognizing the competence of child care providers. The successful CDA candidate meets the following:
- I. To establish and maintain a safe, healthy learning environment.
 - II. To advance physical and intellectual competence.
 - III. To support social and emotional development and to provide positive guidance.
 - IV. To establish positive and productive relationships with families.
 - V. To ensure a well-run, purposeful program responsive to participant needs.
 - VI. To maintain a commitment to professionalism.
- B. **Criteria:** When the candidate has completed the preparation and is ready to apply for the CDA Credential, she/he must meet and verify the following:
- Be 18 years or older
 - Have a high school diploma or equivalent
 - Have 480 hours of experience working with young children within the past five years
 - Have 120 hours of formal child care education within the past five years with a minimum of ten hours of content in each of eight content areas:
 1. Planning 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

Formal child care education and training in our state is offered in a variety of ways. Several colleges have a specific CDA course for college credit. Other colleges have a non-credit course specific to the CDA requirements. In 2008, the Community College Early Childhood Alliance designated four 3-credit classes (12 credits) as the CDA courses for state-wide consistency:

ECE 103—Introduction to Early Childhood Education
ECE 133—Child Health, Safety & Nutrition
ECE 243—Early Childhood Guidance

And one of the following:

ECE 158—Early Childhood Curriculum I
ECE 159—Early Childhood Curriculum II
ECE 221—Infant Toddler Care/Education

Optional wrap up one-credit class may be offered at some locations:

ECE 106—CDA Standards

Providers who wish to complete these courses as a pathway to the CDA Credential can contact their local community college or T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood[®] IOWA for more information.

Another way providers and teachers may earn their training hours for their CDA Credential would be by individually compiling their training hours from approved, recognized training organizations such as Child Care Resource & Referral, Area Education Agencies, or ISU Extension. The provider and her/his advisor need to ensure that the minimum of ten hours in each of the eight content areas has been met.

- C. **Document Competencies:** Completing the education hours is just one step in the process, however. The candidate must also document their competence with five other steps:

Preparation:

1. Prepare a professional resource file including six 300-500 word papers where the candidate prepares an autobiography and statements of her/his competence in the different areas of care, as well as other resources
2. Parent opinion questionnaires are distributed and the results are confidentially submitted
3. A formal observation report is done by an early childhood professional who meets a level of experience and education needed to be an advisor

Verification Visit:

4. A written exam administered by a representative from the Council for Professional Recognition
5. An oral interview conducted by the representative from the Council for Professional Recognition

The six steps help to ensure that many types of evaluation are completed, that the candidate is assessed not only caring for children, but from the parents of the children in her/his care, from her/his instructors, from her/his CDA advisor, from the Council representative, on verbal skills, written skills, child development knowledge, and preparedness.

- D. **CDA Assessment Types:** The CDA Credential is granted as: a center based infant/toddler (birth up to 36 months old) CDA Credential **or** a center based preschool (3-5 years old) CDA Credential for those who work in centers and preschools, a family child care CDA Credential, or a home visitor CDA Credential. Non-English monolingual and bilingual options exist for the above listed credential types. Initially, it is granted for a three-year period, with some simple renewal requirements such as completing one 3-credit course and belonging to a professional association, as well as several other steps. After the initial renewal, the CDA may be renewed for five-year periods.
- E. **The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Program** assists providers from regulated child care/preschool settings in Iowa to earn their CDA Credential by offering a T.E.A.C.H. scholarship requiring commitment to their current child care program and offering a compensation increase (usually as a bonus) when the credential is earned. There are two ways T.E.A.C.H. can help:
- We can pay for the college credit courses and the materials and books required to achieve the 120 training hours as part of a T.E.A.C.H. nine-credit minimum scholarship contract,
- and/or
- We can provide support for the \$325 application fee for the assessment, and provide a bonus when the credential is earned.

Questions?

Check the CDA website at the Council for Professional Recognition: www.cdacouncil.org

For more information about the CDA in Iowa or an information/application packet (specify if you are interested in the scholarship for the community college classes or for the assessment fee) please call us at T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® IOWA (515) 331-8000, email us at info@iowaaec.org, or go to our website at www.iowaaec.org.

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