

Council for Professional Recognition

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The Results Are In: CDA Credential is Essential to Early Childhood Professionals

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Beginning in 1983, and administered in five-year intervals, a survey of CDA has been conducted to assess the impact credentialing has on individual's careers and professional development. In collaboration with the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk (CRESPAR), located at Howard University in Washington, D.C., the Council recently completed its 2004 survey.

As in previous years, the mail survey included a sample of recent CDAs. Those who obtained their CDA within the last 3 years; mid-level CDAs that were credentialed 5 years ago; and veterans who received their credentials 10 years ago. This sampling process provides information over time about the career trajectories of CDAs. To gather information needed for the study, a sample of 6,511 CDAs was randomly selected. Approximately 1,300 surveys were returned, for a response rate of 20%.

A complete report of the findings of the survey will be posted on the Council's website (www.cdacouncil.org) and also on the website of the National Institute for Early Education Research (www.nieer.org). When compared to the previous survey conducted in 1999, findings for both the 1999 and 2004 surveys are highly consistent. The data indicate that obtaining a CDA Credential continues to be a viable path for individuals who work in the early childhood profession. As a result of obtaining the CDA Credential, these same individuals are increasingly likely to obtain college credit, receive salary increases, and continue to pursue higher education.

The survey includes questions addressing background information and demographics, how training requirements are met, professional changes after receiving the credential, and education and experience of the CDA. The demographic profile of CDAs remains relatively unchanged, except for a few exceptions. The percentage of Hispanic CDAs increased from 12% to 14%. Meanwhile, the proportion of CDAs who reported obtaining an infant-toddler credential increased from less than 15% to 25%, most likely reflecting the professional requirements of Early Head Start.

Among the most encouraging findings of the 2004 survey is the impact of credentialing on the educational attainment of CDAs. All three groups surveyed tended to attain more two or four-year degrees after credentialing. The analysis also revealed a significant increase in the educational levels of CDAs from the time of credentialing to the time of the survey.

The Council encourages, but does not require, candidates to fulfill the 120-clock hour training requirement through degree-track credit. Although not required, 45% of all respondents indicated they received college credit for some or all of their training; most were awarded between 3 and 12 credits for their training. One exciting trend is that when comparing new CDAs to veteran CDAs, a greater number of new CDAs obtained credit for their training.

More than half of the CDAs reported receiving salary increases after earning their credential. Again, a greater proportion of new CDAs reported salary increases, hopefully signifying yet another trend.