



Q&A: Starting a CTE/CDA® High School Program

What is the *CDA® Handbook for High School: A Guide to Advocacy and Implementation*?

- The *Child Development Associate® (CDA) Handbook for High School: A Guide to Advocacy and Implementation* is for instructors, school faculty and administrators interested in developing a high school CDA® training program. This publication will prepare you to launch and sustain a CDA® program at your school and across your district.

How do I sign-up to receive a copy of the *CDA® Handbook for High School*?

- To receive a copy of the *CDA® Handbook for High School* eBook, please review the background information on [CDA® high school programs](#) and complete the [eBook registration page](#).

How do I use the *CDA® Handbook for High School*?

- The *Handbook* is designed to walk you through all the important steps in the *CTE/CDA® program development* process. It includes guidance on gathering input from key stakeholders, such as students, administrators, families, child care programs and community resources.
- Throughout the *Handbook*, you will find links to support research on your state's requirements and guidelines. In addition, the *Handbook* includes questions and checklists to help you ensure that you have the proper components to launch and/or maintain a high school CDA® program.
- As you proceed in developing your CTE/CDA® program, you may benefit from referencing the checklists to track your overall process.

Does a high school CTE/CDA® program require permission from or application to the Council of Professional Recognition to connect courses with the CDA or to launch a program?

- No. Neither a permission from nor application to the Council for Professional Recognition is required. However, the courses/program must adhere to all CDA® requirements.

Does this program fit into most state CTE pathways?

- Yes. The high school CTE/CDA® program fits into many state pathways. Please refer to the *Handbook*, “Chapter 1: Career Pathways in Early Childhood Education.” This chapter provides early childhood education (ECE) employment information, including ECE career ladders and detailed information on “The CDA® as a Career Pathway.” This chapter also provides links to state-specific policies for your reference.

Does this program work in rural high schools as well as urban and suburban schools?

- Yes. The Council for Professional Recognition assesses candidates in any child care facility that meets state licensing regulations, including those facilities or programs legally exempt from licensing, such as church and military programs.

What are the student requirements for completing a CDA® High School program?

- The student must be a junior or senior enrolled in a high school career and technical education program (though the student may begin training/classes as a freshman or sophomore).
- The student must complete 120 clock hours of professional early childhood education, covering the growth and development of children (setting specific), with no fewer than 10 hours in each of the Council for Professional Recognition’s eight CDA® subject areas.
- The student must complete 480 hours of experience within the last three years working with children (setting specific). Experience may be as paid staff or as a volunteer.
- The student must complete a CDA® Professional Portfolio and Family Questionnaires:
 - Each student’s portfolio must also contain a copy of an official letter (from their school principal or teacher) on school letterhead or a certificate verifying 120 clock hours of training.

Is the CDA Professional Portfolio required to be printed, or can it be digital?

- Students can organize their portfolios online or as a printed collection of the required documents. Examples and guidance for both printed and online portfolios are available in the *Handbook*, “Chapter 6: Getting Started: Implementing a CDA® Program in Your High School.” ECE students should begin collecting documents to add to their portfolio as soon as they have completed the entry-level course and either expressed an interest in completing the CDA® Career Pathway or securing a job in which they will work with young children.

Can the Home Visitor CDA® credential be earned in high school?

- No. High school candidates are eligible to apply for any credential type *except home visitor*, as long as the candidate’s training and experience coincide with the credential type they are applying for.
- For example, if the candidate’s high school CTE/CDA® program exclusively offers training geared toward working with preschool-age children (3-5 years old), then the candidate would only be qualified to apply for the preschool center-based CDA® credential.

What settings can a student work in?

High school students can work in the following settings:

1. Center-Based Infant and Toddler with children ages birth to 36 months
2. Center-Based Preschool with children ages 3-5 years old
3. Home-Based Family Child Care with children birth to 5 years old

What types of experience working with children can count towards the CDA® experience hours? Do volunteer work hours count?

- High school students can accumulate the 480 hours of experience working in a child care program as either a paid staff member or volunteer.
- For example, accepted experiences include work in a child care program serving children within the candidate's school, or one within the candidate's community. The candidate's experience must be with children of the same age and in the same setting as the type of credential the candidate aspires to earn.

Who is responsible for paying the CDA® application fee?

- The applicant pays the CDA® application fee. However, if CDA® assessment fee scholarships are available in your state or district, students should apply for these before spring to ensure they can receive application funding, submit their CDA® applications and complete the assessment process prior to graduating from high school. Students who are eligible for scholarships generally receive an eligibility notice from the funder, followed by a letter and voucher code (though some programs send checks directly to the Council.)
- Please see a [directory of available scholarships](#).

To implement this high school program, is there a standard curriculum, and what are some of the ways that students can earn the required 120 hours?

- We encourage options for meeting this requirement to be diverse and responsive to specific community needs and program structures. Whether a high school offers early childhood education in the form of traditional electives, a series of course selections, an academy model and/or a structured career pathway; high schools can be creative in the organization of the education component as long as the curriculum includes the content of the required eight CDA® subject areas.
- Please refer to the *Handbook*, "Chapter 2: Earning a CDA® in High School." This section includes: "Benefits of Earning a CDA® in High School;" "Types of High School CDA® Preparation Programs (Traditional Elective, Dual Enrollment and Dual Credit);" and, "Establishing Career and Technical Education (CTE) Articulation Models with Institutions of Higher Education."

What is the process for applying for the CDA® and taking the exam?

- Once high school students are near the end of their final semester in a CDA® high school program, they are required to either [set up a YourCouncil account](#) and complete the application online (to save \$75, as online applications are discounted) or complete the CDA® paper application provided in the back of each CDA® Competency Standards Book.
- **Important note:** High school students seeking to apply for the CDA® cannot submit their application until they have met ALL prerequisite requirements: 480 hours of experience, 120 hours of training and completion of the professional portfolio.
- The CDA® Exam is a 65-question, computer-based exam that candidates must take at a local Pearson VUE testing site. CDA® exam questions test the candidate's knowledge of basic early childhood best practices, based on the CDA® Competencies Goals and Functional Areas.

There are very few CDA Professional Development (PD) Specialists™ in my area to assess high school students. If I do not run the center, why can't I be the CDA PD Specialist™?

- A CDA PD Specialist™ cannot conduct CDA Verification Visits® for their own students. This is a conflict of interest. We are always in need of qualified CDA PD Specialists™ who can meet the needs of our CDA® candidates. We invite you to [read more](#) about our recruitment efforts and share our [recruitment brochure](#), which contains information and resources for applying to become a CDA PD Specialist™.

Is this a program that could be implemented for special needs kids?

- The Council fully supports the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and offers reasonable accommodations for candidates with special needs during CDA® exams. Candidates must submit a request for [special accommodations](#) prior to applying for the CDA®.

Will initial application deadlines and virtual verification visit deadlines be extended in 2021?

- Initial application deadlines have been extended to 12/31/2021. All candidates who qualified for this extension have been granted this extension. When the candidate logs into their account and accesses their application, they will see their new extended deadline listed.
- New initial applications that are created from May 2021 until June 2021 will receive the extended deadline of 12/31/2021. *This extension only applies to **initial candidates**.*
- Virtual verification visit candidates: Candidates that have been approved for a virtual verification visit accommodation still only have 30 calendar days, from the day they receive their final approval email from the Council, to complete their virtual visit. If these candidates have not yet completed the exam, they now have until 12/31/2021 to complete the exam.

What are best practices to keep in mind to ensure that high school students successfully complete CDA® training?

- Many high school programs have completed their training programs and supported their students in successfully earning the Child Development Associate® (CDA) Credential™. The golden rule is to abide by all Council for Professional Recognition requirements and organize the program in a way that coincides with all Council guidelines, including the timing of training and application, so that students can be assessed and obtain their results prior to graduation.

What are some important additional tips to keep in mind?

- We advise you to ensure that students have the CDA® Competency Standards books (for the correct setting.)
- We encourage you to assist students with setting up their online accounts in YourCouncil, and to help students with their online applications to initiate the assessment process.
 - Within their application, students must check the section noting that they are in a high school CTE program.
- We encourage you to assist students with finding a Pearson VUE Testing Center.
- We encourage you to ensure that students have an active email account that is checked on a regular basis.

If you launch a program, please let us know at partnerships@cdacouncil.org!