CDA E-Portfolio FAQs

CDA General Questions

What is the Child Development Associate® (CDA) National Credentialing Program?

The CDA National Credentialing Program is a professional development opportunity for early educators working with children aged birth to 5 years old to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and abilities in the early childhood education field. The CDA® National Credentialing Program assesses candidates using multiple sources of evidence, including an exam, observation, and professional portfolio with resources and competency statements prepared by the candidate.

What do I need to do to complete the CDA® credentialing process?

To complete the CDA credentialing process you must:
- Meet all eligibility and training requirements
- Purchase a *CDA® Competency Standards* book in the setting of your work with children
- Complete the documentation collection required for your setting's professional portfolio
- Identify a PD Specialist to complete your CDA Verification Visit®
- Submit a completed CDA application, which includes the Director's Permission Statement and full payment
- Take the CDA® exam at a local Pearson Vue test center
- Complete the CDA Verification Visit® with your PD Specialist

How do I find my Council Customer ID?

Your Council Customer ID can be found in YourCouncil (https://yourcouncil.org). YourCouncil is the system used to apply for the CDA credential. After you create an account and log in, you can find your Council Customer ID by clicking on the "Profile" link that appears when you hover over the account icon in the upper right corner of the screen. YourCouncil Customer ID will be listed at the top of the page.

Note that YourCouncil is separate from the E-Portfolio system, which is only used to create a portfolio. You must set up an account in each system. It's recommended that you use the same email address when setting up both accounts.

Will I need a CDA Competency Standards book?

Yes, all candidates are required to purchase a setting-specific *Competency Standards* book prior to applying and have the book during the CDA Verification Visit®. You will need to purchase a *Competency Standards* book in the setting of your work with children. The book provides details on requirements for the professional portfolio, which are specific for each setting.

How do I choose the correct CDA credential setting?

Review the settings below to determine which best describes your work with young children.

BIRTH TO FIVE: A center-based birth to five setting is a state-licensed or legally exempt child development center where a candidate can be observed working with a group of at least three children, all of whom are under 3 years old, or at least eight children, all of whom are 3 to 5 years old. For the Birth to Five CDA, a candidate must have 160 hours, as a paid employee or volunteer, in each sub-age group (infants, toddlers, and preschoolers), totaling 480 hours.
NOTE: The E-Portfolio's Birth to Five setting option will be available soon.

INFANT-TODDLER: A center-based infant-toddler setting is a state-licensed or legally exempt child development center where a candidate can be observed working with a group of at least three children, all of whom are under 3 years old. For the Infant-Toddler CDA, a candidate must have 480 hours, as a paid employee or volunteer, working with children under 3 years old.

PRESCHOOL: A center-based preschool setting is a state-licensed or legally exempt child development center where a candidate can be observed working with a group of at least eight children, all of whom are ages 3 through 5 years old. For the Preschool CDA, a candidate must have 480 hours, as a paid employee or volunteer, working with children ages 3 to 5 years old.

FAMILY CHILD CARE: A family child care setting is a family child care home where a candidate can be observed working with at least two children 5 years old or younger who are not related to the candidate by blood or marriage. The setting must meet at least the minimum level of applicable state and/or local regulations. Family child care settings are also eligible in localities where there is no regulation of family child care. For the Family Child Care CDA, a candidate must have 480 hours, as a paid employee or volunteer, working with children ages birth to five years.

HOME VISITOR: A home visitor setting is an established program of home visits (to families with children 5 years old or younger) that supports parents in meeting the needs of their young children. In this setting, regular home visits are the primary method of program delivery. Candidates for a Home Visitor credential follow a slightly different assessment process. For the Home Visitor CDA, a candidate must have 480 hours, as a paid employee or volunteer, working with families of children ages birth to five years old in a Home Visitor or Adult Education program.

What education/training is required to earn the CDA?

Candidates for Birth to Five, Preschool, Infant-Toddler, and Family Child Care settings must complete 120 hours of formal early childhood education training applicable to the setting with no fewer than 10 hours in each of the 8 CDA Subject Areas:

1. Planning a safe and healthy learning environment
2. Advancing children's physical and intellectual development
3. Supporting children's social and emotional development
4. Building productive relationships with families
5. Managing an effective program operation
6. Maintaining a commitment to professionalism
7. Observing and recording children's behavior
8. Understanding principles of child development and learning

Candidates for the Home Visitor CDA must complete 120 hours of formal early childhood education training and principles of adult learning with no fewer than 10 hours in each of the 8 CDA Subject Areas for Home Visitors:

1. Promoting health and safety in the home environment
2. Enhancing parents' skills to advance children's physical and intellectual development
3. Promoting parents' use of positive ways to support children's social and emotional development
4. Understanding family systems and development
5. Managing an effective home visitor program operation
6. Maintaining a commitment to professionalism
7. Working across the child welfare continuum
8. Understanding the principles of child development and learning

Formal education/training hours must be earned through an agency or organization with expertise in early childhood teacher preparation. The education/training hours can be for college credit or non-college credit. Training will not be accepted from independent consultants or conference workshops. The training agency or organization must verify your education in the form of an official transcript, certificate, or letter.

Education may be completed through a wide variety of organizations, including two- and four-year colleges, private training organizations, vocational or technical schools, resource and referral agencies, and early childhood education programs that sponsor training, such as Head Start or the U.S. military. You may accumulate the hours from a single program or a combination of programs. Each agency or organization must provide verification of your education in the form of a college transcript certificate, letter on official letterhead, or an approved state registry learning record.

What documentation is required for education/training?

Acceptable forms of education/training documentation include:
- College transcript from an accredited college or university
- Certificate of training
- Letter of training on official letterhead of the agency
- Learning record from an approved state registry

Documentation must include:
- Training agency name, address, and logo
- Course name(s)
  Note: If course name does not include age reference, certificate must include ages covered
- CDA Subject Area of training
- Candidate's name
- Number of hours/credits awarded
- Dates of training
- Official signature of instructor

What can I expect during the CDA Verification Visit®?

During the CDA Verification Visit®, the PD Specialist will:
- Review the contents of your professional portfolio, including training transcripts/certificates.
- Observe you working with children
- Reflect with you, focusing on your areas of strength or growth found in the portfolio or seen during the observation

CDA Portfolio Questions

What is the professional portfolio?

The professional portfolio is compiled independently by each candidate as part of the credentialing process. The compiled resources and documents are reviewed by the PD Specialist during the CDA Verification Visit®. The professional portfolio is composed of:

- Education/Training Documentation
- Family Questionnaires
- Resource Collection for each Competency Goal
- Six (6) Reflective Statements of Competence
- Professional Philosophy Statement
- Other forms required for your setting, which are available in your *CDA® Competency Standards* book and the E-Portfolio system.

When should I prepare my professional portfolio?

Prepare your portfolio within 6 months before you apply for your CDA credential.

Is the professional portfolio different for each setting?

While some components of the portfolio are consistent, there are many setting-specific requirements. Portfolio requirements are detailed in the Competency Standards book for each setting. The E-Portfolio system is designed to accommodate setting-specific requirements.

Where can I access the forms required to complete my professional portfolio?

All required forms are available in your Competency Standards book, and in the E-Portfolio system. Although you can access required forms in the E-Portfolio system, you are still required to purchase the Competency Standards book for your setting. The Competency Standards book will guide you through the credentialing process, and it contains the Comprehensive Scoring Instrument that the PD Specialist will use during your CDA Verification Visit®.

What resources are available to help me complete my professional portfolio?

CDA® Competency Standards books provide candidates with a detailed guide through the credentialing process and requirements, including preparation of the professional portfolio. Candidates applying for an initial CDA credential are required to purchase a Competency Standards book in the setting of their work with children.

The Council also provides the E-Portfolio system to help candidates complete their portfolios with ease. The system takes you through portfolio sections step-by-step to meet the setting-specific requirements outlined in the *CDA® Competency Standards* books. There are several resources you can access within the E-Portfolio system.

- The "Resource Library" includes required forms, general CDA information, and the E-Portfolio Overview Video, which you will also be able to view when you set up your E-Portfolio account.
- The "How to Upload and Download" page has videos on uploading and downloading. You will need to upload and download documents to complete your E-Portfolio. The videos also explain how to create electronic documents and images.
- The "My Uploads" page displays what you have uploaded arranged by section. You can download, review, delete, and replace your uploads as needed from this page.

Is there someone who can review my Reflective Statements of Competence?

The Council does not review portfolio content prior to submission. For support and guidance, we recommend asking your employer, colleague, coach, or CDA trainer to review your portfolio.

Note that third party review/approval of your portfolio does not guarantee you have met the Council's requirements. Please use the Competency Standards book for your setting and the portfolio checklist to ensure nothing is missing. Upon submission, final portfolio review and approval are conducted by the Council.

E-Portfolio General Questions

What is the E-Portfolio?

The E-Portfolio is an electronic version of the professional portfolio. You can create an E-Portfolio by using the E-Portfolio system (https://yourcdaportfolio.org) to enter information and upload documents required in your portfolio. The E-Portfolio system takes you through the portfolio sections step-by-step to meet the setting-specific requirements outlined in the *CDA® Competency Standards* books. When you are finished with the sections, you will be able to create a PDF document that you can save and share.

Is the E-Portfolio different for each setting?

Yes, the E-Portfolio system is designed to accommodate requirements for each setting. When you set up your account, you will be prompted to select a CDA credential setting. Your selection will determine the version of the E-Portfolio that you complete.

What types of files can be uploaded into the E-Portfolio system?

JPEG, GIF, DOC/DOCX, PNG, and PDF formats are accepted. Note that you cannot upload certified or password-protected files. To include a certified or password-protected file in your E-Portfolio, consider the following methods:

- Print to PDF: Use "Print to PDF" in your printer settings to create a PDF file without encryption.
- Scan and Save: If you have access to a scanner, scan the hardcopy and save it as a PDF.
- Convert to JPEG: Convert each page to a JPEG, then assemble into a PDF.

How do I share my E-Portfolio with the PD Specialist?

The "Putting It All Together" page covers the last steps to create and share your E-Portfolio. First, make sure you provide all the required information and documentation. If you have addressed all the requirements, your "My Progress Summary" page will display 100% complete for all sections. When all requirements are completed, create a PDF of your portfolio by clicking the "Create My Portfolio PDF" button on the "Putting It All Together" page, then save your portfolio PDF.

During your CDA Verification Visit®, you can have the PD Specialist review a hard copy or a digital copy of your E-Portfolio. Provide a hard copy by printing the portfolio PDF. If you prefer sharing a digital copy, make sure the portfolio PDF is available for the PD Specialist to view via computer or tablet while on-site. While the E-Portfolio system is mobile-friendly, we do not recommend using a mobile device to present your portfolio to the PD Specialist.

How do I save my portfolio PDF?

1. On the "Putting It All Together" screen, click the "Create My Portfolio PDF" button.
2. The PDF file should open automatically in a new browser tab.
3. Click the save icon, usually in the top-right corner of the screen.
4. When prompted, choose a location on your computer to save the file.
5. Rename the file using a clear and recognizable format — include your last name and the date.
6. Click Save.

Can I complete an E-Portfolio in Spanish?

Yes, you view the E-Portfolio system and generate your portfolio PDF in Spanish. You may change your display language anytime from your profile page.

While you can view instructions in English and Spanish, all content (responses to prompts, materials, and documents) must be in the language you consistently use with children in your work setting.

- If you primarily speak English with children, your portfolio contents must be in English.
- If you primarily speak Spanish, your portfolio contents must be in Spanish.
- If you use both English and another language daily, you may apply for a bilingual specialization. The E-Portfolio system supports this option when you select your CDA setting.

Can I complete an E-Portfolio with a bilingual specialization?

For bilingual specialization, a Candidate must have a working knowledge of both languages and work in a bilingual setting that requires the Candidate to speak both languages daily and consistently with children and families. Please refer to your Competency Standards book for more information regarding bilingual language specialization.

The E-Portfolio system is designed to incorporate bilingual specialization requirements for English and a second language, if bilingual specialization is selected during E-Portfolio account creation. Additional requirements include:

- Family Questionnaires - When inviting families to complete the Family Questionnaires, families should be asked to complete all questions, paying particular attention to Question #14, which is specific to bilingual programs.
- Resource Collection - The resources used directly with children and families must be presented in both languages (RC I-3, RC II, RC III, RC IV).
- Reflective Statements of Competence - For the Competency Statements, three statements are required in English and three are required in the other language. Candidates are free to decide which statements to write in English and in the other language. The statements must include information about how the candidate applies Principles of Dual Language Learning to their bilingual daily practice with children.
- Professional Philosophy Statement - The candidate may write the Professional Philosophy Statement in either language.

Note that the use of AI or any other translation service is not allowed.

What topics are covered in the E-Portfolio Video?

These topics are covered. For reference, timestamps are provided.

- 00:00 Welcome to the CDA E-Portfolio
- 01:01 Progress Summary
- 01:36 Navigation Bar/Menu
- 02:24 Mobile Device
- 02:52 User Profile
- 03:49 CDA Education
- 05:23 Competency Goals
- 06:43 Resource Collection I
- 07:30 Resource Collection II
- 08:14 Resource Collection III
- 08:41 Resource Collection IV
- 09:32 Resource Collection V
- 10:17 Resource Collection VI
- 11:27 Important Tip
- 11:45 Competency Statements
- 13:27 Family Questionnaires
- 14:11 Other Portfolio Requirements
- 15:31 Professional Philosophy Statement
- 15:53 CDA Professional Portfolio Checklist
- 16:19 Putting It All Together
- 17:14 Candidate Resources
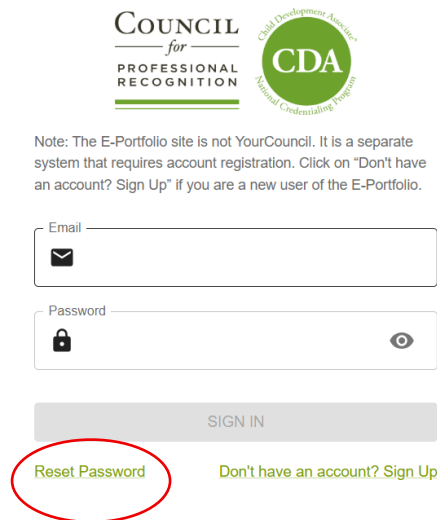- 18:27 Thank You

E-Portfolio Account Questions

What should I do if I do not receive the E-Portfolio account verification email?

The account verification email will come from support@yourcdaportfolio.org. We recommend adding that email address to your safe list. The email may take a few minutes to come through. If you do not see the email in your inbox, be sure to check your junk/spam folder. If you are unable to find the email, contact Customer Care during business hours (8:00 AM to 7:00 PM EST Monday-Friday) at 800-424-4310 or via email to cdafeedback@cdacouncil.org.

How do I reset my password for the E-Portfolio system?

Go to the E-Portfolio login screen and click "Reset Password."
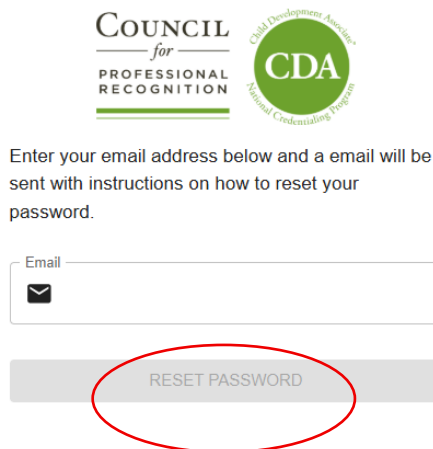
When prompted, enter your email address, then click "RESET PASSWORD."

You will receive an email with instructions to reset your password. If you do not see the email, be sure to check your junk/spam folder.

What if I need to switch my setting?

If you need to switch your setting, contact Customer Care for assistance (8:00 AM to 7:00 PM EST Monday-Friday) at 800-424-4310 or via email to cdafeedback@cdacouncil.org. Before you switch your setting, we recommend you create a portfolio PDF by clicking the "Create My Portfolio PDF" button on the "Putting It All Together" page. Make sure to save your portfolio PDF to document information and responses that do not carry over.

What if I need to add or remove bilingual specialization?

If you need to update your language specialization, contact Customer Care for assistance (8:00 AM to 7:00 PM EST Monday-Friday) at 800-424-4310 or via email to cdafeedback@cdacouncil.org. Before you add or remove bilingual specialization, we recommend you create a portfolio PDF by clicking the "Create My Portfolio PDF" button on the "Putting It All Together" page. Make sure to save your portfolio PDF to document information and responses that do not carry over.

The left-hand navigation bar in the E-Portfolio system vanished. How do I fix it?

If you do not see the left-hand navigation bar, save your progress, then refresh the screen. If this does not fix the issue, open your device's Settings to check that Display is set to 100%.

I entered text in every field, but I cannot click save. How do I fix it?

The likely issue is one or more fields contain text that auto populated. If you type or copy/paste text into each field, this should resolve the issue. If you do select auto-populated text, deleting then retyping the last character should resolve the issue.

I tried uploading a profile picture, but it's not working. How do I fix it?

If you upload your profile picture but are unable to see it, here are a few tips to assist:

- Being centered in the photo is key.
- Photos that are square or tall work best.
- Wide/horizontal photos may not work as well because only the middle portion shows.

Note that uploading a profile picture is not required, nor is the picture included in the portfolio PDF generated by the E-Portfolio system.