



CDA Credentialing Decision Enhancement Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

General Questions

What does this change mean for me as a CDA® candidate?

The Council is updating the CDA® credentialing decision process to better recognize your competence. We will no longer require a verification visit for candidates who demonstrate a qualifying level of competence on the CDA exam. This streamlined decision process ensures that we have a valid basis for awarding the credential, while reducing unneeded steps for candidates who have already shown their competence. For more information, please see [this overview](#) of the *CDA Credentialing Decision Process Enhancement*.

When does the 6-month window for completing the credentialing process begin?

The 6-month window to complete the credentialing process begins on the date your application payment is successfully submitted. Please ensure that all required assessment components are completed and submitted within this 6-month timeframe.

How will I know if I qualify for a streamlined decision?

If you demonstrate a qualifying level of competence on the CDA® exam, you will receive notice via email from the Council after we receive your CDA exam results. Please ensure that you regularly monitor the email address used to create your application in *YourCouncil*.

Do I still need to purchase a CDA® Competency Standards book?

Yes. All candidates applying for an initial CDA® credential are still required to purchase a CDA® *Competency Standards* book in the setting of their work with children. The *CDA Competency Standards* books give candidates a detailed guide through the CDA credentialing process, the *CDA Competency Standards*, and the CDA® *Professional Portfolio* requirements.

If I don't pass the CDA® exam, can I retake the exam?

If you do not pass the CDA® exam, you will have two options:

1. Retake the exam for \$125 per attempt (no appeal required).

*Candidates are allowed to retake the exam two additional times. **Each retake requires a separate payment of \$125.***

2. Request to close your file, so you may begin a new CDA application.

Important: *If you are unsuccessful after three total exam attempts, you will not receive the credential and may reapply after a six-month waiting period.*

If I don't receive my CDA® credential, can I appeal the decision?

If you do not receive your CDA® credential, you will have the option to submit an appeal if you believe Council policies or procedures were violated during your exam and/or verification visit.

CDA® Professional Portfolio Questions

What is the process for submitting my professional portfolio?

Your complete professional portfolio must be uploaded to your application either as a single file or multiple files prior to completing your payment. You may upload your portfolio as pictures or documents. See below for screenshots of the upload pages in the application.

The screenshot displays the 'Welcome to YourCouncil' page. The top navigation bar includes the Council logo, a 'CDA' badge, and a 'Welcome to YourCouncil' message. On the right, there are icons for home, payment, email, and a user profile labeled 'Chanel'. A 'Select Language' dropdown is also present.

The main content area shows user information: Submitter: Chanel Greene, CDA Application: CDA Initial Application, Credential: CDA, Center Based Preschool (Ages 3 - 5), You are Currently Editing Application ID: 945888, and Application Status: CDA Pre-Application.

A sidebar on the left lists navigation options: Pre-Application Instructions, Profile, Additional Demographic Details, Credential Type, Portfolio Upload Method (highlighted with a red box), Language Specialization, Cancel Application, and Pre-Application Status.

The main content area is divided into two sections, both highlighted with red boxes:

- Upload Your CDA Professional Portfolio**: This section explains that the portfolio can be uploaded in two ways: 1. **By Category**: Upload individual files under each Portfolio category. 2. **Single File**: Upload entire Portfolio as one PDF file. Below this, it says 'Choose the method that works best for you below.'
- Portfolio Upload Method**: This section asks 'How would you like to upload your Portfolio?' and provides two options: 'Select One' (which is selected) and 'I would like to upload separate files under each Portfolio category' (which is selected). There is also an option for 'I would like to upload my Portfolio as one PDF file'. A 'Next' button is located at the bottom right of this section.

Click **Add** to upload files

Manage Portfolio Uploads

Choose Category
A: Summary of My CDA Education

Upload Date
01/09/2026

File Description*

File Upload*
 No file chosen

How do the new decision enhancements impact candidates who have already started their application?

The enhanced CDA credentialing decision process will take effect on **February 2, 2026**.

- Candidates who submit their applications **before 12:00 a.m. on February 2** will **not** need to upload a professional portfolio and will complete the current CDA credentialing process.
- Applications submitted **on or after 12:00 a.m. on February 2** must include a professional portfolio and will follow the enhanced decision process.

At what point is my CDA® Professional Portfolio reviewed?

If you meet the qualifying level of competence on the CDA® exam and do not require a verification visit, your portfolio will be reviewed by the Council after your exam scores are received.

If you are required to have a verification visit, your portfolio will be reviewed by the PD Specialist as part of your verification visit.

What types of files can I upload?

You can upload the following file types: .jpg, .jpeg, .png, .bmp, .webp, .tiff, .tif, and .pdf.

What is the maximum file size I can upload?

You can upload a maximum file size of 20 MB.

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

The Council provides an E-Portfolio tool to make completing your portfolio easier. The system guides you through each portfolio section step by step, helping you meet the setting-specific requirements outlined in the *CDA® Competency Standards* books. This will be available in February 2026.

Inside the E-Portfolio system, you'll find several helpful resources:

- **Resource Library:** Includes required forms, general CDA information, and the E-Portfolio overview video, which you can also watch when you set up your E-Portfolio account.
- **How to Upload and Download:** Contains videos showing how to upload and download documents, create electronic files, and add images—all needed to complete your E-Portfolio.
- **My Uploads:** Shows everything you've uploaded, organized by section. From here, you can review, download, delete, or replace any files as needed.

These tools are designed to help you complete your portfolio efficiently and accurately.

What is the E-Portfolio?

The “E-Portfolio” is an electronic version of the professional portfolio. The E-Portfolio system is a tool to help candidates collect and organize their professional portfolio requirements. Using the E-Portfolio system is not required. You can create an “E-Portfolio” by using the E-Portfolio tool to enter information and upload documents required in your portfolio. The E-Portfolio tool takes you through portfolio sections step-by-step to meet setting-specific requirements outlined in the *CDA® Competency Standards* books. When you are ready, you will be able to create a PDF document that you can save, share, and upload to your CDA application.

Please note: The E-Portfolio system is an optional tool designed to help candidates create and organize their professional portfolio in an online, structured, and user-friendly way. Candidates are not required to use the E-Portfolio system; it is provided as a resource to support preparation.

The portfolio upload requirement refers specifically to submitting a completed professional portfolio into the Council's *YourCouncil* system as part of the credentialing process. While the E-Portfolio tool can help candidates prepare and organize materials, the actual submission of the portfolio will occur within *YourCouncil*.

What is the expected turnaround time for my professional portfolio to be reviewed?

If your professional portfolio is being reviewed internally by the Council, you can expect it to be reviewed within **15 business days** of your CDA® exam results. If your professional portfolio is being reviewed by your PD Specialist, it will be reviewed either prior or during your verification visit.

How does this process impact Monolingual (language other than English or Spanish) candidates?

Monolingual candidates will still be required to **complete both** the verification visit and exam. The process for requesting an assessment in a language other than English or Spanish remains largely the same:

- You must first submit an online request to complete the assessment in another language.
- The Council will review your request. You may not proceed with your application until a decision has been made.
- Once your request is approved, you may upload your portfolio and complete your online application.

If you are approved to complete the assessment in a language other than English or Spanish, you will now complete **a computer-based exam in the approved language, administered via remote proctoring**. Additional details about the remote proctoring process will be provided after your application is submitted.

If I am applying for the home visitor setting, do I still need to upload my portfolio?

No. The Home Visitor CDA® credential setting will continue to follow its current process. Home Visitor candidates **will not** be required to upload their professional portfolio in the system, and their portfolios will still be reviewed onsite by a PD Specialist due to the credential's distinctive requirements.

What happens if my professional portfolio is incomplete or needs revisions?

If your professional portfolio is incomplete, you will receive a notification from the Council requesting the specific missing information. Your application will be placed in a "Need More Information" status in *YourCouncil*. You will have 15 business days to upload and provide the missing materials. The first re-review is free of charge. Each subsequent re-review will incur a \$35 fee. This process will continue until all required materials are received, and your portfolio is complete.