Education and Training Guidelines

National CDA Credentialing Program

These guidelines provide the early childhood education and training requirements established by the Council for Professional Recognition. It describes the acceptable documentation for the National Child Development Associate® (CDA) credentialing program. These guidelines are applicable to initial and renewal applications.

Early childhood education coursework is a core requirement for the CDA® credential. It builds the knowledge and skills needed for effective practice and ensures candidates are prepared to support children's learning and development.

Training Alignment

CDA® training should clearly demonstrate how the course curriculum aligns with the national *CDA® Competency Standards* (6 *Competency Goals*,13 *Functional Areas* and more than 100 competency indicators) are the skills CDA candidates are required to demonstrate during the CDA assessment. The eight *CDA® Subject Areas* represent the body of knowledge (theory) CDA candidates are required to learn and apply in their daily work (practice).

The Council equally values each of the eight *CDA® Subject Areas*. CDA coursework must include 120 clock hours with at least 10 hours in each subject area and the remaining 40 hours in any of the subject areas.

Approved Education and Training Authorities

The Council for Professional Recognition requires candidates to submit formal education documentation from organizations with expertise in early childhood educator preparation. This new guidance ensures that an approved formal third-party entity has approved and verified the training provided to CDA® candidates.

The Council will accept education documentation from the following authorities:

1. **State Workforce Registries:** State-managed systems that review, recognize, or track early childhood training and professional development for the workforce

2. **Accredited Entities:** Organizations that are accredited by a third party (e.g., IACET, SACSCOC, Middle States, Higher Learning Commission, etc.)
3. **Government-Authorized and/or Funded Entities:** Federal, state, tribal, or local public entities and those receiving federal and state funding for education and training programs

*Note: Training documentation from multi-state child care organizations (e.g., Bright Horizons, Learning Care Group, Kindercare, etc.) will be accepted contingent **upon verification** that issuing programs meet rigorous quality standards aligned with the Council's guidance.*

To document attainment of early childhood education, candidates must include one or more of the following in their *CDA® Professional Portfolio*:

- **State Registry Learning Record/Transcript:** An official record from a state workforce registry documenting *approved* training, credentials, or professional development completed by an individual
- **Transcript:** An official academic record from a high school, college or university listing completed courses, credits or clock hours earned
- **Training Certificates:** An official document certifying that an individual completed a specific educational course or training workshop related to early childhood education.
- **CTE Attestation Letter:** An official letter confirming education completion from a high school career and technical education (CTE) program

Note: While the Council will continue to accept training certificates as documentation for now, it encourages the use of learning records rather than the submission of individual training certificates. The acceptance of individual training certificates will be phased out over time, with the goal of transitioning to learning records as the primary method of documenting training. The Council encourages training organizations to create "learning records" that list all of the training the CDA® candidates have received or ensure the training is documented in the state workforce registry.

Documentation Details

Education documentation must include:

	Training Certificate*	Transcript	State Registry Record/ Transcript	Learning Record	CTE Attestation Letter
Participant Name	X	X	X	X	X
Organization Name	X	X	X	X	X
Organization Logo	X	X	X	X	X
Course Title	X	X	X	X	
Hours/Credits Awarded	X	X	X	X	X
Completion Date	X	X	X	X	X
Authorized Signature	X				X

The required documentation must be included in the CDA candidate's professional portfolio.

Professional Ethics and Conduct

The Council expects all education providers and organizations submitting education documentation to uphold the highest standards of professionalism and ethics. All records must be accurate, authentic, complete, and submitted in good faith. Any falsified, altered, misleading, or improperly obtained documentation will not be accepted.

Next Steps

To strengthen quality assurance and improve data tracking, the Council will encourage early childhood education and training organizations to register for an account in *YourCouncil*. Registration will help the Council provide more consistent orientation and support to organizations providing CDA® candidate education preparation. In addition, the system will support sharing data on awarded credentials through the Council's website, increasing transparency, and improving public access to information. CDA candidates looking for training will also have access to information and resources provided by these organizations in order to make informed decisions.

References and Resources

- **About the CDA®:** www.cdacouncil.org/en/about
- **ECE Registered Apprenticeship Pathways:** www.cdacouncil.org/en/ece-registered-apprenticeship-pathways
- **Educator Pathways:** www.cdacouncil.org/en/educator-pathways
- **Find a Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) Organization - Child Care Aware® of America:** www.childcareaware.org/resources/ccrr-search
- **High School Pathways:** www.cdacouncil.org/en/high-school-pathways
- **International Accreditors of Continuing Education and Training (IACET) - Accredited Providers:** www.iacet.org/affiliates/accredited-providers-list
- **Navigating Professional Workforce Registries, Learning Records, and Recognition:** www.cdacouncil.org/en/national-workforce-registries
- **Relationship Between the CDA® Competency Standards and 8 CDA® Subject Areas:** www.cdacouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/ENG-SPA_Relationship-Between-the-CDA-Competency-Standards-and-8-CDA-Subject-Areas_final.pdf
- **United States Department of Education (USDE) – Institutional Accrediting Agencies:** www.ed.gov/laws-and-policy/higher-education-laws-and-policy/college-accreditation/institutional-accrediting-agencies
- **Workforce Registry Transcripts:** www.cdacouncil.org/en/national-workforce-registries/approved-state-workforce-registries