

## CDA CERTIFICATION

In 1986-87 over half of all children ages birth to five were living in families in which both parents work or in which a single parent was working.

In 1991, 53% of women with an infant younger than age one were in the labor force.

30% of non-employed mothers use early care and education centers to provide education and social benefits for preschool children.

Quality child care programs do have positive result on the development of young children. This requires a competent staff, good facilities, materials and curriculum.

The Child Development Associate (CDA) National Credentialing Program is targeted at providing quality child care. A CDA is a person able to meet the specific needs of children and whom, with parents and other adults, work to nurture children's physical, social, emotional and cognitive growth in a child development framework. CDAs work in a variety of settings including Head Start, day care and other preschool programs. Although they are not usually responsible for the total center, they are responsible for a group or classroom of children within a center or home, or a group of families and their children in a home visitor program.

Individuals can become CDAs by participating in a variety of training experiences for early childhood staff in their local community. Once they are trained, they can apply to the Council for assessment according to national standards and procedures. The candidate shows evidence about his/her work in the form of a written examination, an oral interview, an observation while working with children, questionnaires submitted by parents, and the persona's file of professional resources and competency statements. The information is reviewed by a committee and a decision is made whether or not to award the CDA Credential to he candidate.

There are six Competency Goals that must be demonstrated by CDAs:

1. Establishing and maintaining a safe, healthy learning environment.
2. Advancing physical and intellectual competence.
3. Supporting social and emotional development and providing positive guidance and discipline.
4. Establishing positive and productive relationships with families.
5. Ensuring a well-run, purposeful program responsive to participant needs.
6. Maintaining a commitment to professionalism.

The CDA Credential is awarded for three child care settings: Center-Based Programs, Home Visitor Programs, and Family Day Care Programs.

CDA Certification requires documented classroom instruction time, employment at a child care center, and that the applicant be at least eighteen years of age. Documentation of classroom instruction time includes: date, number of clock hours, topic covered, and instructor's signature and qualifications. A candidate must have completed ten hours of instruction in each of the function areas plus 40 additional hours for a total of 120 hours of classroom instruction. This instruction can date back five years from when a person applies for a certificate. Workshop hours are accepted. Instruction hours can be collected from a number of areas. A wide variety of learning experiences is encouraged. Some appropriate topics for instruction in each area include:

1. ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING A SAFE, HEALTHY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT
  - CPR Training
  - Food Handler's Permit
  - Workshops on room arrangement
  - Space Planning
  - Nutrition Planning
  - Abuse/Neglect
2. ADVANCING PHYSICAL AND INTELLECTUAL COMPETENCE
  - Lecture/discussion time
  - Office of Child Care classes
  - Head Start inservice
  - Instructor/student contact
  - Community classes
3. SUPPORTING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PROVIDING POSITIVE GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE
  - Guidance
  - Games
4. ESTABLISHING POSITIVE AND PRODUCTIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILIES
  - Family involvement program
  - Home visits
  - Professional and family involvement
  - Specialists to handle problems
  - Parent Conferences
  - Maintaining confidentiality
5. ENSURING A WELL-RUN, PURPOSEFUL PROGRAM RESPONSIVE TO PARTICIPANT NEEDS
  - Lesson plan
  - Using observations
  - Coordination with other staff on curriculum plans or teacher roles
  - Local/state standards and licensing
  - Menus
  - Record keeping
6. MAINTAINING A COMMITMENT TO PROFESSIONALISM
  - Confidentiality
  - Abuse/Neglect
  - Understanding program philosophies
  - Avoiding burn-out/stress management
  - Understanding program differences
  - Licensing regulations
  - Updating on early childhood
7. OBSERVATION/RECORDING
  - How to complete observations and how to use them in program management.
  - Recording keeping
8. EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT
  - Theories
  - Ages and Stages

Training hours can be moved around according to the needs of the applicant. Assigning these hours to the correct area is a big responsibility and is the duty of the applicant. A sample chart that may be useful in tracking hours is found on the following page. If you are interested in becoming CDA certified, you should begin documenting your training hours now. A chart to record these hours is included at the end of this lesson.

For each of the competency goals, there are function goals that are supportive toward completion of the competency goal.

- I. Establishing and maintaining a safe, healthy learning environment
  1. **SAFE:** Candidate provides a safe environment to prevent and reduce injuries.
  2. **HEALTHY:** Candidate promotes good health and nutrition and provides an environment that contributes to the prevention of illness.
  3. **LEARNING ENVIRONMENT:** Candidate uses space, relationships, materials, and routines as resources for constructing an interesting, secure, and enjoyable environment that encourage play, exploration, and learning.
  
- II. Advancing physical and intellectual competence.
  4. **PHYSICAL:** Candidate provides a variety of equipment, activities, and opportunities to promote the physical development of children.
  5. **COGNITIVE:** Candidate provides activities and opportunities that encourage curiosity, exploration, and problem solving appropriate to the developmental levels and learning styles of children.
  6. **COMMUNICATION:** Candidate actively communicates with children and provides opportunities and support for children to understand, acquire, and use verbal and nonverbal means of communicating thoughts and feelings.
  7. **CREATIVE:** Candidate provides opportunities that stimulate children to play with sound, rhythm, language, materials, space and ideas in individual ways and to express their creative abilities.
  
- III. Supporting social and emotional development and providing positive guidance and discipline.
  8. **SELF:** Candidate provides physical and emotional security for each child and helps each child to know, accept and take pride in himself or herself and to develop a sense of independence.
  9. **SOCIAL:** Candidate helps each child feel accepted in the group, helps children learn to communicate and get along with others, and encourages feelings of empathy and mutual respect among children and adults.
  10. **GUIDANCE:** Candidate provides a supportive environment in which children can begin to learn and practice appropriate and acceptable behaviors as individuals and as a group.

- IV. Establishing positive and productive relationships with families.
  - 11. **FAMILIES:** Candidate maintains an open, friendly, and cooperative relationship with each child's family, encourages their involvement in the program, and support the child's relationship with his or her family.
  
- V. Ensuring a well-run, purposeful program responsive to participant needs.
  - 12. **PROGRAM MANAGEMENT:** Candidate is a manager who uses all available resources to ensure an effective operation. The Candidate is a competent organizer, planner, record keeper, communicator, and a cooperative coworker.
  
- VI. Maintaining a commitment to professionalism.
  - 13. **PROFESSIONALISM:** Candidate makes decisions based on knowledge of early childhood theories and practices. Candidate promotes quality in child care services. Candidate takes advantage of opportunities to improve competence, both for personal and professional growth and for the benefit of children and families.

For further information contact:

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