

## Credentials

### Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential

The design of the Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential program is based on the belief that teaching and home visitor skills and abilities can be demonstrated. The CDA Program is designed to assess and credential early childhood care and education professionals based on performance. A Child Development Associate (CDA) is an individual who has successfully completed the CDA assessment process and has been awarded the CDA Credential. CDAs are able to meet the specific needs of children and work with parents and other adults to nurture children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual growth in a child development framework.

Currently, the Council serves as a collaborative partner and maintains a cooperative agreement with ACF-Office of Head Start to support staff development for teachers, teacher aides, and home visitors employed in Head Start, Early Head Start, and other child care programs. This partnership supports career paths that encompass CDA and academic credentials.

This is a nationally recognized credential. The credential is issued initially for 3 years and every 5 years thereafter, per successful CDA renewal completion.

#### CDA Credential Settings:

- Center-based Credential
  - Infant/Toddler Center-based Credential
  - Preschool Center-based Credential
- Home Visitor Credential
- Family Child Care Credential

Bilingual endorsements are available for all of the settings.

**Note: ONLY the Council for Professional Recognition can award this Credential through the application process.**

#### Training Requirement:

The eligibility requirement for CDA Candidates to have 120 clock hours of formal child care education may be met through participation in the wide variety of training available in the field, including in-service. While the formal education hours can be credit or noncredit, the hours must be through an agency or organization with expertise in early childhood teacher preparation. The agency or organization must provide verification of the Candidate's education in the form of a transcript, certificate, or letter.



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The 120 clock hours of education must be documented, with no fewer than 10 hours in each of the following content areas:

1. Planning a safe, healthy, learning environment
2. Steps to advance children's physical and intellectual development;
3. Positive ways to support children's social and emotional development;
4. Strategies to establish productive relationships with families;
5. Strategies to manage an effective program operation;
6. Maintaining a commitment to professionalism;
7. Observing and recording children's behavior; and
8. Principles of child development and learning.

**Note: NO college or university can award this credential although college coursework can be used to meet the training requirements.**

Eligibility Requirement:

Candidates seeking to apply for CDA assessment in any of the three settings (center-based, family child care, and home visitor) must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Be **18 years of age or older**
- Hold a **high school diploma or GED**
- Have **480 hours of experience working with children** within the past five years
- Have **120 clock hours of formal child care education** within the past five years

Candidates applying for a Bilingual Endorsement must meet the above requirements and be able to speak, read, and write well enough in both English and another language to understand and be understood by both children and adults.

All Candidates must also be able to identify an appropriate setting where they can be observed working as the lead caregiver.

Application & Assessment Requirement:

Upon receipt of an Application Packet, a Candidate is ready to begin working on the requirements for CDA assessment. These requirements are completed in three phases: preparation of necessary materials; filing of application; and verification of competence and knowledge.

Preparation: The first set of requirements involves the Candidate documenting evidence of her or his competence from the following three sources:

1. The Professional Resource File (prepared by the Candidate)
2. The Parent Opinion Questionnaires (collected by the Candidate)
3. The CDA Assessment Observation Instrument (completed by the Advisor)

Application: When the above documentation is complete, the Candidate and Advisor sign the Application Form and send it to the Council with the assessment fee (\$325) and training documentation. This begins the CDA Assessment Process and the Council assigns a Council Representative to conduct the Verification Visit.

Verification Visit: The second set of requirements involves a Council Representative visiting the Candidate to verify competence and knowledge using two methods:

4. The Early Childhood Studies Review (administered by the Council Representative)
5. The Oral Interview (conducted by the Council Representative)

Upon receipt of a Candidate's Application Form, the \$325 assessment fee, and documentation of training, the Council schedules a Verification Visit by a Council Representative. The Council Representative contacts the Candidate to arrange the date and place for the visit. These assignments are made four times a year according to the following timetable:

| Application Deadline | For Assessments to Occur                 |
|----------------------|--|
| December 1st         | 1st Quarter: January, February, March    |
| March 1st            | 2nd Quarter: April, May, June            |
| June 1st             | 3rd Quarter: July, August, September     |
| September 1st        | 4th Quarter: October, November, December |

For complete information, contact the Council for Professional Recognition at [www.cdacouncil.org](http://www.cdacouncil.org).

### **Family Development Credential (FDC)**

The program is a nationally respected training and credentialing program developed with input from families, frontline workers, supervisors and policy makers.

The FDC program collaborates with agencies to teach family workers how to coach families to set and reach their goals for healthy self-reliance. Based on **Cornell University research**, the interagency FDC program is available in communities across New York and many other states\* to frontline workers from public, private and non-profit service systems (e.g. home visitors, case managers, family resource center workers, community health workers).

**\*Arizona is currently in the approval process to offer the FDC program. Contact AHSA for further information.**

Following fifteen years of development at Cornell and widespread dissemination, on January 1, 2010, the FDC program proudly joined the **Center for Transformative Action (CTA)**. The credential is now issued by the Center for Transformative Action.

Many workers earn college credit for earning the FDC, through local community colleges, or PONSI-affiliated universities and colleges nationwide.

To earn the FDC, front-line workers take **90 hours of classes** based on *Empowerment Skills for Family Workers* (Forest 2003), **complete a portfolio** documenting their ability to apply these concepts and skills, and **pass a standardized exam**.

To earn the FDC, workers complete three requirements:

#### 90 hours of classes:

FDC course *Empowerment Skills for Family Worker* course, led by an official FDC instructor.

#### Complete a portfolio:

Work with a trained FDC portfolio advisor, who provides guidance to complete required portfolio work.

For each of ten chapters,

- Responses to at least three “Activities to Extend Your Learning” from the Worker Handbook;
- Plan and carry out at least one skills practice for each chapter; and
- Share this with your portfolio advisor and document it in the portfolio

The portfolio culminates with three consecutive Family Development Plans the worker creates with one family, to demonstrate an ability to help a family choose and take steps toward goals.

Pass a standardized exam:

Pass written examination based on *Empowerment Skills for Family Workers*.

Costs:

Include a fee charged by the local FDC program (fees vary, averaging around \$850), *Empowerment Skills for Family Workers* (\$35) and a \$250 credentialing fee.

Family development is based on the following core principles:

1. All people and all families have strengths.
2. All families need and deserve support. How much and what kind of support varies throughout life.
3. Most successful families are not dependent on long-term public support. They maintain a healthy interdependence with extended family, friends, other people, spiritual organizations, cultural and community groups, schools and agencies, and the natural environment.
4. Diversity (race, ethnicity, gender, class, family form, religion, physical and mental ability, age, sexual orientation) is an important reality in our society, and is valuable. Family workers need to understand oppression in order to learn to work skillfully with families from all cultures.
5. The deficit approach, which requires families to show what is wrong in order to receive services, is counterproductive to helping families move toward self-reliance.
6. Changing from the deficit model to the family development approach requires a whole new way of thinking, not simply more new programs. Individual workers cannot make this shift without corresponding policy changes at agency, state, and federal levels.
7. Families need coordinated services in which all the agencies they work with use a similar approach. Collaboration at the local, state, and federal levels is crucial to effective family development.

8. Families and family development workers are equally important partners in this process, with each contributing important knowledge. Workers learn as much as the families from the process.
9. Families must choose their own goals and methods of achieving them. Family development workers' roles include helping families set reachable goals for their own self-reliance, providing access to services needed to reach these goals, and offering encouragement.
10. Services are provided so families can reach their goals, and are not themselves a measure of success. New methods of evaluating agency effectiveness are needed to measure family and community outcomes, not just the number of services provided.
11. For families to move out of dependency, helping systems must shift from a "power over" to a "shared power" paradigm. Human service workers have power (which they may not recognize) because they decide who gets valued resources. Workers can use that power to work with families rather than use power over them.

**For further information, contact:**

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