

Penn State **Extension**



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**CDA**

**Child Development  
Associate Credential**

**Step-by-Step**  
help from  
**Better Kid Care**

**[extension.psu.edu](https://extension.psu.edu)**

**[www.betterkidcare.psu.edu](https://www.betterkidcare.psu.edu)**

# 5 Steps Toward Earning Your CDA Credential

## Step 1

### Become Familiar With the CDA Credential

- Visit the Council for Professional Recognition Web site at [www.cdacouncil.org](http://www.cdacouncil.org)
- Explore the Better Kid Care “CDA Information” link at [www.betterkidcare.psu.edu](http://www.betterkidcare.psu.edu). Download [CDA: Get Started](#), a five-part PDF to help you with the details of obtaining and keeping your CDA credential.

**You Care, We Care**

## Step 2

### Order an Application Packet

- Order a CDA application packet from the Council for Professional Recognition (choose a CDA Credential type: Center-Based Preschool, Center-Based Infant/Toddler, Family Child Care or Home Visitor). Call 800-424-4310 or visit [www.cdacouncil.org](http://www.cdacouncil.org)
- Candidates seeking to apply for the CDA credential must meet the following eligibility requirements:
  - ✓ Hold high school diploma or GED or you are a junior or senior in a high school vocational program in early education
  - ✓ Have 480 hours of experience working with young children within the last five years
  - ✓ Fulfill all requirements stated in the CDA application packet

## Step 3

### Complete Your Formal Education Requirement

- CDA candidates must document successful completion of 120 clock hours of formal child care education (within five years from date of applying). The 120 clock hours of education include no fewer than 10 hours in each of the following CDA subject areas:
  - CDA 1: Planning a safe, healthy environment to invite learning
  - CDA 2: Steps to advance children’s physical and intellectual development
  - CDA 3: Positive ways to support children’s social and emotional development
  - CDA 4: Strategies to establish productive relationships with families
  - CDA 5: Strategies to manage an effective program operation
  - CDA 6: Maintaining a commitment to professionalism
  - CDA 7: Observing and recording children’s behavior
  - CDA 8: Principles of child development and learning

#### Better Kid Care Can Help You Complete Your Formal CDA Education Requirements

Better Kid Care offers professional development training through one- and two-hour Distance Education lessons that meet the formal child care education training requirement needed to obtain a CDA credential. The Distance Education lessons are coded according to the CDA subject areas.

Visit our Web site at [www.betterkidcare.psu.edu](http://www.betterkidcare.psu.edu) and click on Distance Education to see the complete listing of titles. For more information call the Better Kid Care office at 800-452-9108.

## Step 4

### Prepare Documentation and Professional Resource File

- Prepare Professional Resource file as stated in the CDA Assessment System and Competency Standards book (Autobiography, Six Statements of Competence, and Resource Collection)
- Complete the CDA Assessment Observation (done by a CDA Advisor within six months of CDA Direct Assessment)
- Distribute/collect Parent Opinion Questionnaires
- Prepare CDA Direct Assessment application and assemble Professional Resource file as stated in the CDA Assessment and Competency Standards book

## Step 5

### Complete the CDA Direct Assessment Process

- Complete Direct Assessment application form (in application packet) and verify all training requirements. Apply on-line at <http://www.cdacouncil.org/yourcda>
- Review all documentation and professional resource file materials (use your CDA Assessment System and Competency Standards book)
- Contact the Council of Professional Recognition to arrange for the CDA Direct Assessment.
- The Council will review the results and issue credentialing decisions based on competence in meeting the CDA Competency Goals and Functional Areas
- Celebrate your success!

# CDA

## What is a CDA Credential?

The Child Development Associate credential (CDA) is a national credential awarded by the Council for Professional Recognition to individuals who have successfully completed the CDA assessment process. Obtaining a CDA credential impacts children's learning and supports families. Earning the CDA Credential has many advantages, including motivating early caregivers toward continuing education and providing a platform for professional and career opportunities.

# CDA

## How Do I Get Started?

Visit [www.betterkidcare.psu.edu](http://www.betterkidcare.psu.edu) and explore "CDA Information". There you'll find CDA: Get Started, a five-part PDF to help you with the details of obtaining your CDA credential.

Need someone to talk to? Call Better Kid Care at 800-452-9108. E-mail your CDA questions to [betterkidcare@psu.edu](mailto:betterkidcare@psu.edu).

**"The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it away from you"**

~ B.B. King

## Financial Support

For CDA scholarship information contact the Council for Professional Recognition by calling 800-424-4310 or visit <http://cdacouncil.org/the-resource-center/cda-scholarships>.

## CDA Renewal

CDA credentials must be renewed within three years of the date the CDA credential was awarded. CDA renewal requires 4.5 Continuing Education Units (CEUs) or a three college credit course (in early education). Better Kid Care awards CEUs through Distance Education lessons. For more information of CEUs and CDA Renewal, visit Better Kid Care's "CDA Information" link at [www.betterkidcare.psu.edu](http://www.betterkidcare.psu.edu). Contact the council to order a CDA Renewal packet at [www.cdacouncil.org](http://www.cdacouncil.org) or by calling 800-424-4310. Renew online at <http://www.cdacouncil.org/yourcda>

An **OUTREACH** program of the College of Agricultural Sciences

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341 North Science Park Road - Suite 208, State College, PA 16803;  
Phone 1-800-452-9108. Web site: [www.betterkidcare.psu.edu](http://www.betterkidcare.psu.edu).

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