

CDA Steps for the Birth to Five CDA® Credential

Step 1: Prepare

- **Education Requirement:**
 - Hold a high school diploma, GED, or be a junior/senior in a high school career/technical education program in early childhood education.
 - **Training Hours:**
 - Complete **120 clock hours** of formal early childhood education covering children birth to five.
 - Must include **at least 10 hours in each of the eight CDA® Subject Areas**.
 - **Work Experience:**
 - Accumulate **480 hours** of work (paid or volunteer) in the past three years.
 - Must include **160 hours with each sub-age group**:
 - Infants (Birth–17 months)
 - Toddlers (18–36 months)
 - Preschoolers (3–5 years).
 - Experience must be in a **center-based setting** (not babysitting, drop-in care, or Sunday school).
 - **Portfolio Preparation:**
 - **Purchase the Competency Standards Book** for Birth to Five (magenta cover).
 - Develop a **Professional Portfolio** that addresses **all three sub-age groups**.
 - Required forms and details will be in the **Birth to Five CDA® Competency Standards book**.
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Step 2: Apply.

- **Application Cost:** \$525 (same as other settings).
- **Submit Application Online:**
 - Provide personal and center director's email.
 - Include your **PD Specialist ID number**.
- **PD Specialist Selection:**
 - Must be endorsed for Birth to Five.
 - Can be found via the **Find-a-PD Specialist Tool** on YourCouncil.org.
- Once approved, you'll receive a **"Ready to Schedule" notice** for your exam and verification visit.



Step 3: Demonstrate


This step includes both the **Verification Visit** and the **CDA® Exam**:

Verification Visit

- Conducted by a **Birth to Five–endorsed PD Specialist**.
- Takes place at a **state-licensed or legally exempt child development center**.
- You will be observed working with:
 - At least **3 children (birth–36 months)** *or*
 - At least **6 children (ages 3–5 years)**.
- During the visit, the PD Specialist will:
 - Review your **Professional Portfolio**.
 - **Observe** your work with children.
 - Conduct a **reflective dialogue**.

CDA® Exam

- Administered through **Pearson VUE** testing centers.
- **Format**: Multiple-choice (about 65 questions, including scenarios).
- **Time**: 1 hour 55 minutes.
- Must be completed **before** your Verification Visit.

 **Timeline**: You have **6 months** from your “Ready to Schedule” notice to complete both the Exam and Verification Visit.

Step 4: Earn

- You do not receive a simple “pass/fail.”
 - The Council reviews **both the Exam and Verification Visit performance**.
 - If successful, you will be awarded the **CDA® Credential: Birth to Five setting**.
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Step 5: Renew

- The Birth to Five CDA® Credential is valid for **3 years** from issue date.
- Renewal requires proof of continuing education, professional development, and maintaining your role in early childhood education.



Free resource developed by www.ChildCareED.com