

# How to Compile Your Professional Portfolio for the Birth to Five CDA Credential

The **Birth to Five CDA Credential** recognizes early childhood educators working with children from **birth through age five** in a center-based program, family child care setting, or home visitor program.

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## CDA Requirements at a Glance

- **Education:** High school diploma/GED (or high school junior/senior in an ECE program).
  - **Training Hours:** **120 clock hours** of formal training, with **at least 10 hours in each of the 8 CDA subject areas**.
  - **Work Experience:** **480 hours** of experience working with children birth to five within the last three years, including:
    - **160 hours with infants** (birth–17 months)
    - **160 hours with toddlers** (18–36 months)
    - **160 hours with preschoolers** (3–5 years)
  - **Portfolio:** A Professional Portfolio demonstrating competencies across all three sub-age groups.
  - **Exam:** Pass a multiple-choice CDA exam (~65 questions, 1 hour 55 minutes) via Pearson VUE.
  - **Verification Visit:** Complete a classroom observation and reflective dialogue with a PD Specialist endorsed for Birth to Five.
  - **Credential Validity:** 3 years; renewal requires continued education and work experience.
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## Organizing Your Professional Portfolio

Your portfolio is a professional showcase and assessment tool. Use the **Birth to Five CDA Competency Standards book** (magenta cover) as your guide.

### Required Portfolio Sections



Free resource developed by [www.ChildCareED.com](http://www.ChildCareED.com)

- **CDA Portfolio Cover Sheet**
  - **Tab A: Summary of CDA Education**
    - Proof of **120 hours of CDA training** (minimum 10 hours in each of the 8 CDA subject areas).
  - **Tab B: Family Questionnaires and Summary Sheet**
    - Surveys collected from at least 50% of families you serve, plus a summary.
  - **Tabs C-H: Reflective Competency Statements**
    - **Tab C:** Statement 1 + RC I-1, RC I-2, RC I-3
    - **Tab D:** Statement 2 + RC II-1 through RC II-9
    - **Tab E:** Statement 3 + RC III
    - **Tab F:** Statement 4 + RC IV-1 through RC IV-4
    - **Tab G:** Statement 5 + RC V
    - **Tab H:** Statement 6 + RC VI-1 through RC VI-3
  - **Tab I: Professional Philosophy Statement**
    - 1-2 pages summarizing your beliefs, values, and approach to teaching.
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## Writing Guidelines

- **Length:** Each Reflective Statement is about **500 words**.
  - **Style:** Use reflective language (“I learned,” “I implemented”) and specific examples.
  - **Formatting:** Typed in 11- or 12-point font, proofread for spelling and grammar.
  - **Portfolio Format:** Use a binder, digital file, or organizer; the structure should be clear and professional.
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## CDA Process Timeline

1. Complete training, work hours, and your portfolio.
  2. Submit your CDA application and receive a **“Ready to Schedule”** notice.
  3. Schedule both the **Exam and Verification Visit within 6 months** of receiving the notice.
  4. Successfully pass both components to earn your CDA.
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## Tips for Success

- Start collecting **training documentation and family feedback** early.
- Work on your **portfolio alongside your coursework** to save time.
- Practice for the **exam** with sample questions (available from the CDA Council).



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- Review your Competency Standards book frequently; it is your primary resource.

