

Birth to Five CDA Credential Checklist

Use this checklist to track your progress toward earning the **Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential** for working with children **birth through age five** in a center-based setting.

Step 1: Get Started

- ☐ Purchase the **Birth to Five CDA Competency Standards Book** (magenta cover).
 - ☐ Review all requirements and download official CDA Council resources.
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Step 2: Complete Training & Work Experience

Training:

- ☐ Complete **120 hours of formal Early Childhood Education training** covering all 8 CDA Subject Areas.

Work Experience:

- ☐ Complete **480 hours of professional experience with children ages 0–5** in a center-based program **within the past 3 years**, including:
 - **160 hours with infants** (0–17 months)
 - **160 hours with toddlers** (18–36 months)
 - **160 hours with preschoolers** (3–5 years)
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Step 3: Build Your CDA Professional Portfolio

 Your portfolio must include:

- ☐ Cover Sheet (*My CDA Professional Portfolio* – from Competency Standards Book)
- ☐ Documentation of **training certificates or transcripts**
- ☐ **Family Questionnaires** (at least 50% of families)
- ☐ **Areas of Strength & Professional Growth**
- ☐ **Six Reflective Competency Statements** (500 words each)
- ☐ **Resource Collection** (10 required items, organized by Competency Standard)
- ☐ **Professional Philosophy Statement** (1–2 pages)



Free resource developed by www.ChildCareED.com

Step 4: Apply to the CDA Council

- ☐ Apply online through **YourCouncil** (cdacouncil.org).
- ☐ Pay the CDA Council application fee.
- ☐ Once your application is approved, you'll receive a **"Ready to Schedule"** notice.

Step 5: Take the CDA Exam

- ☐ Schedule and take your **computer-based CDA Exam** (65 questions, 2 hours) at a Pearson VUE testing center.

Step 6: Schedule & Complete Your Verification Visit

- ☐ Use YourCouncil to **find a PD Specialist with Birth to Five Endorsement**.
- ☐ The PD Specialist will:
 - Observe your teaching with **either 3 infants/toddlers (0–36 months) or 6 preschoolers (3–5 years)**.
 - Review your **Professional Portfolio**.
 - Conduct a **Reflective Dialogue**.

Step 7: Earn Your Credential

- ☐ Receive your CDA Credential, valid for **3 years**.
- ☐ Begin planning for renewal (requires ongoing training, work experience, and proof of competency).

