

Updated Checklist for Earning Your CDA Credential

Before you begin

- Choose your CDA setting: ☐ Infant/Toddler ☐ Preschool ☐ Family Child Care ☐ Home Visitor ☐ Birth to Five
 - ☐ Confirm you work with children ages 0–5 in the setting you selected.
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1) Complete CDA Training (120 Hours)

- ☐ Enroll in **ChildCareEd's** CDA training program for your setting.
 - ☐ Complete **120 hours** of formal early childhood education training.
 - ☐ Save your **120-hour training certificate** for your application.
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2) Prepare Your Professional Portfolio (Digital)

- Write **Reflective Competency Statements** for:
☐ CS I ☐ CS II ☐ CS III ☐ CS IV ☐ CS V ☐ CS VI
 - ☐ Write your **Professional Philosophy Statement**.
 - ☐ Gather all other Council-required portfolio items for your setting.
 - ☐ Scan/save everything digitally (PDFs or clear photos) so it's ready to upload.
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3) Verify Work Experience (480 Hours)

- ☐ Complete **at least 480 hours** of professional experience with children ages 0–5 in your CDA setting.
 - ☐ Keep proof of experience (employment letters/pay stubs, as needed).
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4) Apply to the Council

- ☐ Submit your CDA application through the **Council for Professional Recognition**.
 - ☐ Upload your **digital Professional Portfolio** at application time.
 - ☐ Confirm your **480 hours** of experience.
 - ☐ Pay the Council application fee.
 - ☐ Watch for your official scheduling notices.
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5) Take the CDA Exam (Exam-First for Most Settings)

Effective 8/1/2025 for all settings except Home Visitor

- ☐ Receive Council "Ready to Schedule" notice for the **CDA Exam**.
 - ☐ Schedule your exam ASAP (6-month clock starts).
 - ☐ Take and pass the CDA Exam.
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6) Schedule & Complete Verification Visit (If Required)

- ☐ After exam score is received, watch for Council notice to schedule a **Verification Visit** (if required).
- ☐ Complete the Verification Visit with a PD Specialist.
(*Observation + portfolio review + reflective conversation.*)

Note: Some candidates may be awarded without a visit if exam results clearly show competence.

7) Receive Credential Decision

- ☐ Council reviews: training + portfolio + experience + exam + visit (if required).
- ☐ Receive final credential decision from the Council.



8) Access Your Digital CDA Credential

- ☐ Get Credly email invitation after award.
 - ☐ Create Credly account.
 - ☐ Download/print/share your **digital CDA certificate + badge**.
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Disclaimer

- ChildCareEd provides CDA training, **but does not issue the CDA Credential**.
- Completing training does not equal earning the CDA.
- **Only the Council for Professional Recognition** awards the CDA after all requirements are met.

