



# Child Development Associate Credential *Assessment System and Competency Standards*

By Chris Cross, National Trainer and Consultant [chris@courageworksinc.com](mailto:chris@courageworksinc.com) 850-656-7852

The Child Development Associate (CDA) National Credentialing Program is a major national effort initiated in 1971. The purpose of the program is to enhance the quality of child care by defining, evaluating and recognizing the competence of child care providers and home visitors.

Assessment and credentialing of child care providers is administered by the Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition (the Council). More than 50,000 child care providers have earned the CDA Credential since 1975, and 49 states, plus the District of Columbia, have incorporated the credential in their child care licensing regulations.

The CDA Competency Standards, which define the skills needed by providers in specific child care settings, serve as a means for measuring the overall performance of caregivers during CDA assessment. Assessment is available to caregivers working in several settings – center-based programs serving infants and toddlers, and preschool children; family day care programs; and home visitor programs. An optional bilingual specialization is available to Candidates working in bilingual (Spanish/English) programs. A CDA Credential is awarded to a person who demonstrates competence in caring for young children by successfully completing the CDA assessment process.

## **Eligibility Requirements:**

- ✓ Be 18 years or older.
- ✓ Hold a High School diploma or equivalent.
- ✓ Be able to speak, read, and write well enough to fulfill the responsibilities of a CDA Candidate.
- ✓ Sign a statement of ethical conduct.
- ✓ Identify a family child care home where the applicant can be observed working as a primary caregiver; be able to document that the home meets at least the minimum requirements for state and/or local licensing, approval or registration of family child care homes. In areas where there is no regulation of family child care homes, providers may be assessed without this documentation.
- ✓ Obtain permission for observations of the applicant in the family child care home by the owner/operator (if not self) by signing the registration form.

- ✓ The setting must be one where a candidate can be observed working as a primary caregiver with at least two children 5 years old or younger who are not related to the Candidate by blood or marriage.
  
- ✓ Candidate must have completed, within the past five (5) years, 120 clock hours of formal child care education, with no fewer than 10 hours in each of the eight (8) subject areas. This requirement may be met through participation in the wide variety of training available in the field, including in-service and association sponsored workshops. *Subject Areas include: Planning a safe, healthy learning environment; Steps to advance children's physical and intellectual development; Positive ways to support children's social and emotional development; Strategies to establish productive relationships with families; Strategies to manage an effective program operation; Maintaining a commitment to professionalism; Observing and recording children's behavior; and Principles of child growth and development.*

**For more information, please contact the Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition: 1-800-424-4310 or 202-265-9090**  
1341 G. Street, NW, Suite 400,  
Washington DC 20005-3105