

NPRC - Child Development Associate (CDA) Preparation FAQ

What is the CDA?

The Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential is the most widely recognized credential in the Early Childhood Education field and is awarded by the Council for Professional Recognition. Students at NPRC can choose a CDA age level for Infant – Toddler or Preschool.

Who is eligible for a CDA?

Students who are *already working* in a licensed and regulated childcare facility in either an Infant / Toddler classroom or a Preschool / PreK classroom. Ineligible experiences include K-12 schools, afterschool programs, summer camps, babysitting, and parenting.

What can you do with a CDA?

The CDA is Level A on the Pennsylvania’s Early Childhood Career Pathway. It is the first step in a professional career as an Early Childhood provider. Professionals with a CDA credential can serve as ECE support staff (classroom assistant / aide), teaching staff with support for children ages 0-5, or out of school time care providers.

Is the CDA an NPRC degree?

No. The CDA is a credential granted by the Council for Professional Recognition. Only the CDA Council evaluates the candidate’s preparation and decides whether to grant the credential. NPRC prepares students for this evaluation.

What are the specific requirements for a CDA?

CDA Requirement	NPRC Preparation	Student Responsibility
High School Diploma (or equivalent)		X
120 hours of professional education*	X	
480 hours of work experience within the last 3 years at a licensed early childhood facility		X
Membership in an Early Childhood professional organization		X
Professional Portfolio (see below)	X	
CDA Exam		X
Verification Visit		X

*per CDA guidelines, the 120 hours can be fulfilled with **any** combination of Early Childhood academic courses, the non-credit-bearing CDA course through NPRC workforce development, courses from other colleges, online coursework, or professional development offered by PA Keys; ask an ECE instructor if you have any questions.

How does NPRC prepare students for the CDA?

While NPRC does not directly grant the CDA Credential, NPRC can help you prepare for the CDA Exam, Professional Portfolio, and Verification Visit through two different options.

Non-Credit-Bearing CDA:

The non-credit-bearing CDA is offered through NPRC Workforce Development. This 120-hour course focuses on the CDA Essentials textbook and portfolio preparation and is offered in 7-week cohorts on a rolling admission status. Students who successfully complete this course will be well prepared to take the CDA exam and complete their verification visit.

Students will earn 120-hours in the PA PD Registry (the statewide Early Childhood Education Workforce Registry), but no academic credit is awarded.

Students who are granted the CDA Credential by the Council for Professional Recognition may apply for prior learning credit for ECE 110 (3 credits) and ECE 118 (3 credits) to satisfy program requirements for the Associate of Applied Science in Early Childhood Education.

Credit-Bearing CDA:

Two courses, each earning three academic credits, have assessments and outcomes aligned to Child Development Associate (CDA) Professional Portfolio components:

- ECE 110: Introduction to Early Childhood Education (offered Spring and Fall)
- ECE 118: Family Involvement and Collaboration (offered Spring only)

Students must then also complete a third academic course in the NPRC ECE program of their choice. Recommended courses with content that can help students prepare for the CDA exam are ECE 120: Instructional and Classroom Design for Early Childhood Curricula, or any of the courses in Child Development (ECE 216, 230, 232, 233, or 234).

Students who successfully complete these courses will be prepared to take the CDA exam and complete their verification visit. The courses can be taken in any sequence or in any combination of credits.

Students taking the Credit-Bearing CDA coursework earn 9 academic credits towards the Associate of Applied Science in Early Childhood Education. Students who complete any 3 ECE courses may be awarded 120-hours in the PA PD Registry (the statewide Early Childhood Education Workforce Registry).

What does earning a CDA cost?

All students working to earn the CDA will have the following costs associated with preparation and verification of the credential:

CDA Requirement	Cost
CDA Value Package (Textbooks)	\$95
Pediatric First Aid and CPR: Most CDA Candidates have already earned these certifications as part of their employment requirements	Varies by training agency.
Membership in an early childhood professional organization: NPRC recommends that all ECE students maintain NAEYC membership at a cost of \$39 / year. This allows students to both meet this CDA requirement and obtain ECE department approved textbooks through NAEYC at a reduced rate.	Varies by organization.
CDA Assessment Fee: Employers may reimburse you for some of these expenses, or you can apply for a CDA Assessment Fee Voucher from The Pennsylvania Key. More information is available here: https://www.pakeys.org/get-professional-development/financial-assistance/cda-voucher/	\$425

Non-Credit-Bearing CDA:

Students taking the non-credit-bearing CDA in 2020 can complete the course work at a cost of \$960. Please speak to a Workforce Development Specialist for more details.

Credit-Bearing CDA:

Students taking the credit-bearing coursework for the CDA preparation and Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education pay the standard NPRC tuition rate of \$185 per credit plus a fee of \$18 per credit hour up to \$100. Please speak to a Student Success Specialist for information about institutional financial aid availability.

How do the courses at NPRC help students prepare the CDA portfolio?

CDA Professional Portfolio Component	Credit-Bearing		Non-Credit Bearing	Student Responsibility
	ECE 110	ECE 118		
Professional Portfolio Cover Sheet				X
Summary of My CDA Education				X
Family Questionnaire Cover Sheet and Questionnaires				X
Reflective Dialogue Worksheet				X
Resource Collection				
• First Aid and CPR Certificates				X
• Weekly Menu		*	X	
• Weekly Plan	*		X	
• 9 Learning Activities	*		X	
• Bibliography of Children's Books		*	X	
• Family Resource Guide		X	X	
• Record Keeping Forms		X	X	
• State Regulations	X		X	
• Early Childhood Associations	X		X	
• Child Abuse and Neglect Legal Requirements	X		X	
Competency Statements				
• Competency Statement 1	*		X	
• Competency Statement 2	*		X	
• Competency Statement 3	*		X	
• Competency Statement 4		X	X	
• Competency Statement 5		X	X	
• Competency Statement 6	X		X	
• Professional Philosophy Statement	X		X	

*Supplemental assignments completed only for students preparing for the CDA, but not a weight-bearing course assignment.