

Child Development Associate® (CDA®) Credential Process

Step 1: CDA® Council Account Creation

- The CCR&R CDA® Team will assist the child care professional with creating an account on the CDA® Council website. [Educator Pathways - CDA® Council](#)
- The professional will select the appropriate CDA® Pathway based on their classroom and age group experience.

Step 2: Review and Attainment of Training Hours

- Professionals must complete 120 training hours before starting the CDA® application.
- The CCR&R CDA® Team will review training records, transcripts, and certifications with the professional to ensure alignment with the appropriate CDA® competency standards.
- If any CDA® competencies are not covered by current training, the CCR&R CDA® Team will work with the professional to create a Professional Development Plan that outlines targeted training opportunities to complete the remaining required hours.

Examples of Ways to Complete CDA® Training Requirements:

Below are common training options. This is not a comprehensive list. Additional approved trainings can be found in the DHS TrainTN catalog.

CCR&R: Free live training, offered in person and virtually, aligned with CDA® competencies. 	ECP: Additional asynchronous online training options. 	iCDA® Course Preparation: An 80-hour online training series that includes portfolio and exam prep resources. 	DHS-Approved Trainings: Search the TrainTN catalog for approved training opportunities that may count toward CDA® training requirements. 	College Courses: Official college transcripts may be used to document coursework that fulfills the required 120 clock hours across the eight CDA® subject areas.	TCCOTS: Complete free online training through TCCOTS. 
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- The CCR&R CDA® Team will provide regularly scheduled check-in communication (virtual office hours and/or Peer Learning Groups) with the candidates to ensure each candidate is moving forward with their Professional Development Plan and provide resources or support as desired by the candidates.



Step 3: Verification of Experience

Within three years of submitting the CDA® application, candidates must verify at least 480 hours of professional experience within the age group corresponding to their selected CDA® pathway. For example, individuals pursuing a Preschool CDA® must submit a letter from a qualified verifier confirming that they have completed a minimum of 480 hours working with children ages 3 to 5. The CCR&R CDA® Team will assist the candidate, if needed, with submitting this verification.

Step 4: Portfolio

CCR&R will provide a CDA® Competency Standards Book to professionals pursuing the credential and will also host Peer Learning Groups, dedicated office hours, and regional in-person coaching sessions to assist candidates in developing their CDA® portfolio.

Step 5: Application

With CCR&R support, the candidate will visit the [CDA® Council website](#) to pay the application fee and submit the application.

Step 6: CDA® Exam

The candidate will schedule their exam through the CDA® Council website (Child Development Associate (CDA®) Credential testing with Pearson VUE).

Step 7: Verification Visit

CDA® Verification Visits must be conducted by a Professional Development Specialist (PDS) who is a neutral observer. The PDS cannot be the same person assisting them with their CDA® training and portfolio development. The CCR&R CDA® Team will utilize CCR&R coaches who are PDS-certified through the CDA® Council to complete the required observations.

Important: Candidates who achieve a qualifying level of competence on the CDA® exam, when considered alongside all CDA® requirements, including training, work experience, and the professional portfolio, may now be eligible for an expedited award decision that does not require a verification visit.

We're Here to Support You



The TN CCR&R CDA® & Accreditation Team is here to help you explore accreditation options and navigate the process with confidence.

Visit tnccrr.org to connect with a coach and learn more.