

Info Sheet: Montana Early Care and Education Career Development

MSU Early Childhood Project Bozeman, Montana Fall 2011

CDA: Child Development Associate National Credential Program

What is CDA?

A Child Development Associate (CDA) is a nationally recognized individual who has successfully completed a CDA assessment and has been awarded the CDA credential. The individual is able to meet the specific needs of children and works with parents and other adults to nurture children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual growth in their ability to meet the CDA Competency Goals through work in any of four settings.

How is Competence Determined?

The Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition evaluates competence through an assessment process.

Five components make up the documentation:

1. Professional Resource File - a collection of reference materials related to your work;
2. Parent Opinion Questionnaires - feedback from parents with children in your classroom or family child care home;
3. The CDA Assessment Observation Instrument - recorded observations of your skills while working with children and families as primary caregiver;
4. An Oral Interview - interview conducted by a Council trained representative to evaluate your skills and knowledge of good early childhood practices; and
5. A Written Examination - administered by the Council Representative.

Who is Eligible?

To apply for assessment you must meet the following requirements:

Personal

- ◆ Must be at least 18 years old
- ◆ Have a high school diploma or equivalent
- ◆ Have 480 hours of experience working with children within the past 5 years
- ◆ Have 120 clock hours of formal child care education within the past 5 years, including ten hours required in each CDA content area:
 - ◆ Planning 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

(Over)

- ◆ Strategies to manage an effective program operation
- ◆ Maintaining a commitment to professionalism
- ◆ Observing and recording children's behavior
- ◆ Principles of child growth and development

Setting

You must be working in a licensed or registered early childhood program or Head Start where you can be observed as the primary caregiver. Credentials are available in four settings:

- ◆ Center based Preschool (3 -5 years)
- ◆ Center based Infant / Toddler (Birth - 36 months)
- ◆ Family Child Care Home
- ◆ Home Visitor (in an established program of home visits with families with children five years of age or younger)

How Do I Get Started?

There are several options for you to explore to begin the CDA preparation process:

1. Contact the Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition at 1-800-424-4310 in Washington, D.C. for general information. When you have completed your training, to request a CDA assessment application packet that costs \$23.00 (\$18.00 plus \$5.00 shipping) call the Council at 1-800-424-4310.
2. Contact your local child care resource and referral agency, or contact the Montana Early Childhood Project about training opportunities in your part of the state at 1-800-213-6310 or 406-994-4746.
3. Contact your local college. Several colleges around the state are offering early childhood college course work. Contact University of Montana - Western if you are interested in a four semester series of courses designed to prepare you for a CDA assessment and taught in the evening. This outreach program is currently available in Billings, Missoula, Hamilton, Helena, Butte, Bozeman, Great Falls and Havre. Contact Vickie Lansing in UM-Western's Outreach Office at 1-866-799-9140 for information.
4. The Early Childhood Project has scholarships available to cover the cost of assessment in the amount of \$325 and for CDA Renewal fees. To be eligible for the scholarship you must be a current participant on the Montana Practitioner Registry. A copy of your current Practitioner Registry certificate must accompany your scholarship application.
5. Approximately sixty days prior to submitting your CDA assessment materials to the Council in Washington, D.C., submit your CDA Assessment scholarship application to the Early Childhood Project. Your scholarship award in the amount of \$325 will be authorized with the Council. Your official scholarship authorization from the ECP and a copy of your scholarship award letter must accompany your accreditation materials to the Council. Your assessment fee will be withdrawn from the Montana Scholarship Program's account with the Council.
6. Please visit www.mtecp.org to download a scholarship application or to apply to the practitioner Registry.



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