



**Rutgers University  
Center for Children & Childhood Studies**



**Child Development Associate  
(CDA)  
Policy Manual for Candidates**



## **Center for Children & Childhood Studies**

Angela Connor-Morris, Service and Outreach Senior Program Director  
Rebecca Heritage, Program Coordinator

Phone: 856.225.6739

Fax: 856.225.6742

Rutgers University  
Center for Children & Childhood Studies  
326 Penn Street  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, East Wing  
Camden, New Jersey 08102-1410

## **Overview of Our Program**

The Rutgers University Center for Children & Childhood Studies' (RU-CCCS) Camden Campaign for Children's Literacy (CCCL) is designed to meet the needs of Camden's children and families in the area of literacy and early language development. The Campaign recognizes that the first 1,000 days of a child's life are critical if language development is to be successful. The Center, in cooperation with the Camden community, works to address this challenge through six comprehensive initiatives.

The Child Care Literacy Training Program is one of these initiatives. This program provides Camden childcare professionals with 120 hours of classroom instruction so that they may obtain either Pre-K or Infant/ Toddler Child Development Associate (CDA) Certification. The program also provides weekly mentoring and ongoing technical advising to assist with the certification process.

## State Requirements for the CDA

All CDA applicants must meet the following eligibility requirements in order to receive certification:

- Be 18 years of age 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 state- approved child development center where the candidate can be observed working as lead caregiver with a group of at least 8 children in either Pre-K or Infant/ Toddler programs
- Must have had, within the past 5 years, at least 480 hours of experience working with either Pre-K or Infant/ Toddler children in a group setting
- Must have completed, within the past 5 years, 120 clock hours of formal child care education, with no fewer than 10 hours in each of the following eight subject areas:
  - 1) Planning a safe, healthy, learning environment
  - 2) Steps to advance children's physical and intellectual development
  - 3) Positive ways to support children's social and emotional development
  - 4) Strategies to establish productive relationships with families
  - 5) Strategies to manage an effective program operation
  - 6) Maintaining a commitment to professionalism
  - 7) Observing and recording children's behavior
  - 8) Principles of child development and learning
- Candidates for *bilingual specialization* must also (1) work in a bilingual program that requires the candidates to speak both languages daily and consistently; and (2) have a working knowledge of two languages.
- Under special circumstances, Candidates may request a monolingual assessment in Spanish. These are Candidates who work as primary caregivers with a group of children where they serve as the role model for the Spanish language, and consistently conduct daily activities using the Spanish language.

The Council will consider waiving certain eligibility requirements if an individual provides a written explanation and supporting documentation for the request. All such requests should be sent directly to the Council BEFORE submitting an application. Waiver petitions must be documented on a Waiver Request Form.

## **The CDA Assessment System: Direct Route**

A CDA assessment is the process by which a caregiver's competence is evaluated by the Council for Professional Recognition (the Council). In preparation for assessment, the Candidate documents her/his skill in relation to the CDA Competency Standards. Five components make up the documentation:

1. The Professional Resource File
2. The Parent Opinion Questionnaires
3. The CDA Assessment Observation Instrument
4. The Early Childhood Studies Review
5. The Oral Interview

The results are submitted to the Council for review by a committee, which makes the decision whether to award the CDA Credential to the Candidate.

### ***Stages of Assessment***

There are six stages in the CDA Assessment system: (1) Inquiry; (2) Collection of Documentation by the Candidate; (3) Application; (4) Verification Visit by the Council Representative; (5) Credential Award; and (6) Credential Renewal.

#### ***1. Inquiry***

Individuals who meet all the Candidate eligibility requirements and who can be observed in an eligible setting should purchase a packet of application materials from the Council. The packet contains all the instructions and forms necessary for the next stages of assessment.

#### ***2. Collection of Documentation by the Candidate***

The Candidate chooses an early childhood professional- an Advisor- who conducts a formal observation, using the CDA Assessment Observation Instrument.

The Candidate distributes and collects Parent Opinion Questionnaires to determine parents' opinion of her or his work with children.

The Candidate also prepares a Professional Resource File which contains an autobiographical statement, written examples of her or his competence in each of the six CDA Competency Areas, and a collection of resource materials.

### *3. Application*

When the collection of documentation is complete, the Candidate, Advisor, and the Program Director sign the Direct Assessment Application Form, which the Candidate sends to the Council with the assessment fee and training documentation.

### *4. Verification Visit by the Council Representative*

The Council assigns a specially trained early childhood professional to administer a written examination of knowledge of good practices- the Early Childhood Studies Review. This person will conduct an oral interview with the Candidate and check the Professional Resource File, the CDA Assessment Observation Instrument, and the Parent Opinion Questionnaires. At the conclusion of the Verification Visit, the Council Representative will send the results to the Council in Washington, DC.

### *5. Credential Award*

A committee of the Council conducts a review of the Candidate's documentation of competence and makes a decision regarding credential award. If a Credential is awarded, the official Credential is sent to the new Child Development Associate. If the committee decides the Candidate needs more training, the Council notifies the Candidate and informs her/him of appeal procedures and other subsequent options.

### *6. Credential Renewal*

A CDA Credential is valid for three years from the date of award, after which it may be renewed for five-year periods. CDAs may renew their Credential only for the original setting, age-level endorsement, and specialization.

\*Confidentiality Statement- All communication about CDA Candidates is confidential. The Council will not release assessment information without the Candidate's permission.

## ***Pacing the Assessment***

The Council schedules Verification Visits four times a year, on a quarterly system. Before preparing their documentation of competence, Candidates should decide which quarter they want to have a Verification Visit scheduled; then submit the Direct Assessment Application Form by the deadline for that quarter:

<b><i>Application Date</i></b>	<b><i>Verification Visits to Occur</i></b>
December 1	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter: Jan, Feb, Mar
March 1	2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter: Apr, May, Jun
June 1	3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter: Jul, Aug, Sep
September 1	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter: Oct, Nov, Dec

It is very important for Candidates to project the quarter for their Verification Visit. *The information that is submitted to document competence must be collected within six months prior to the time the Candidate submits the Direct Assessment Application Form.*

# **Policies**

## ***Abbott Centers***

Any candidate working in an Abbott classroom must enroll in either night or Saturday CDA classes.

## ***Attendance***

Participants are not permitted to miss more than 2 classes per semester. If more than 2 classes are missed, it will result in exclusion from the program. Also, classes may not be switched. If you know that you will be absent from a class, please make arrangements with your instructor.

## ***Class Cancellation Policy***

You will be notified by RU-CCCS if class is cancelled due to instructor absence or inclement weather. Please only take information regarding class cancellation through an official RU-CCCS staff member.

## ***Evaluation***

From time to time, RU-CCCS may ask that you take part in our formal evaluations so that we may improve our programming.

## ***Orientation***

CDA candidates must attend an orientation session in order to participate in CDA classes.

## ***Technical Advisor Drop-In Sessions***

Every CDA candidate must attend at least 2 technical advisor drop-in sessions per semester in order to stay in the program.

## ***Textbooks***

Textbooks are provided, free of charge, to CDA participants. Although, if a participant leaves the program for any reason, the textbook must be returned to RU-CCCS.

## ***Transportation***

Transportation is available for daytime classes, Monday through Thursday, and is provided by STA Bus Company. If the bus service is altered in any way, you will be contacted by RU-CCCS.

## ***Tutoring***

Additional tutoring is available for CDA candidates. If you feel you need additional assistance, please contact Becky Heritage at 856.225.6739.