



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



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



Center for Children & Childhood Studies

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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.

Advisor Eligibility Requirements

The Advisor must meet the following eligibility requirements and provide verification on the Candidate's Application Form:

A. Personal

Affirm her/his ability to relate to people of various racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Be knowledgeable about local, state, and national requirements, standards, and guidelines for child care programs serving children ages birth through 5 years.

Be familiar with the center where the Candidate will be observed and the needs of families and children in the community.

B. Education and Experience

The Advisor must meet all of the requirements in one of the three combinations of education and experience outlined in sections 1,2, or 3 below:

1

B.A., B.S., or advanced degree in early childhood education/ child development, home economics/ child development, from an accredited college or university. Must include 12 semester hours covering children ages birth through 5 years.

Two years of experience in a child care setting serving children ages birth through 5 years, including:

- **One year** working directly with children in the same age range as the children in Candidate's classroom as a caregiver, teacher, child life worker, social worker, or similar role; and
- **One year** of responsibility for the professional growth of another adult.

2

Associate-level (*two-year*) degree in early childhood education/ child development, home economics/ child development, from an accredited college or university.

Must include 12 semester hours covering children ages birth through 5 years.

Four years of experience in a child care setting in a program serving children ages birth through 5 years, including:

- **Two years** of experience working directly with children in the same age range as the children in Candidate's classroom as a caregiver, teacher, child life worker, social worker, or similar role; and
- **Two years** of responsibility for the professional growth of another adult.

An active CDA Credential

Twelve semester hours of study in early childhood education or child development at an accredited college or university covering children ages birth through 5 years. Six years of experience in a child care setting serving children ages birth through 5 years, including:

- **Four years** working directly with children in the same age range as the children in Candidate's classroom as a caregiver, teacher, child life worker, social worker, or similar role; and
- **Two years** of responsibility for the professional growth of another adult.

Bilingual Specialization

In addition to meeting the requirements listed in sections 1,2, or 3, an Advisor for Bilingual Specialization Assessment must meet the following requirements:

- Be able to speak, read, and write Spanish and English well enough to understand and be understood by both children and adults.
- Have direct experience with bilingual early childhood programs and with non- English- speaking populations.

Conflict of Interest

To promote objectivity and credibility, an individual serving as an Advisor:

1. Must not be working as co-teacher with the Candidate on a daily basis in the same room or group.
2. Must not be the relative of a child in the Candidate's care at any time during the assessment process.
3. Must not be related by blood or marriage or other legal relationship to the Candidate.

Waivers

The Council will consider waiving certain education and training requirements if an individual provides a written explanation and documentation of alternative formal and informal training related to early childhood education/ child development and experience in early childhood teacher preparation.

Waiver petitions must be documented on a Waiver Request Form.

****If you do not meet the eligibility requirements to be your CDA candidate's advisor, the head teacher in your program can fill this position.***

Director Orientation

If you are sending staff members to RU-CCCS' CDA Program, you are required to participate in the Director Orientation, as well as follow-up CDA Roundtable meetings. These meetings are designed to benefit your CDA candidates through your ongoing participation.

Director's Retreats

Throughout the year, RU-CCCS sponsors Director's Retreats. These present an opportunity to informally network with your counterparts, as well as obtain information regarding the CDA program. Although these retreats are not mandatory, you are encouraged to attend. Former Director's Retreats have included trips to Brandywine River Museum, Chester County Historical Society, and The Academy of Natural Sciences.

Director's Academy

RU-CCCS will start a Director's Academy class in the Fall of 2004. This program is designed to provide site directors with information on how to better support staff and address the management issues associated with increasingly demanding program plans, facilities improvement, and contractual agreements. The Director's Academy will include a 45-hour course on child care administration for directors of child care centers that are contracted to provide preschool services in Abbott school districts. The course will cover the following topics:

- 1) Planning and evaluation
- 2) Fiscal management and legal issues
- 3) Marketing and public relations
- 4) Staff management and professional development
- 5) Educational programming
- 6) Facilities management
- 7) Leadership and advocacy, and
- 8) Family support and community resources.

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:

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