

Relationship Between the CDA® Competency Standards and 8 CDA® Subject Areas

A relationship that brings together **theory**, **practice** and **demonstration**. The 8 CDA® Subject Areas represent the body of knowledge (**theory**) CDA candidates are required to learn and apply in their daily work (**practice**). The CDA® Competency Standards (6 Competency Goals & 13 Functional Areas) are the skills CDA candidates are required to **demonstrate** during the CDA assessment.



CDA® COMPETENCY STANDARDS (Skills CDA® candidates must demonstrate)		8 CDA® SUBJECT AREAS WITH EXAMPLES (Theory CDA® candidates must learn and apply)
6 COMPETENCY GOALS	13 FUNCTIONAL AREAS WITH DEFINITIONS	
GOAL I: To establish and maintain a safe, healthy learning environment	SAFE: Candidate provides a safe environment and teaches children safe practices to prevent and reduce injuries. HEALTHY: Candidate provides an environment that promotes health and prevents illness, and teaches children about good nutrition and practices that promote wellness. LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: Candidate organizes and uses relationships, the physical space, materials, daily schedule, and routines to create a secure, interesting, and enjoyable environment that promotes engagement, play, exploration, and learning of all children, including children with disabilities.	SUBJECT AREA 1: Planning a safe and healthy learning environment Examples: Safety, first aid, health, nutrition, space planning, materials and equipment, play SUBJECT AREA 8: Understanding principles of child development and learning Examples: Typical developmental expectations for children from birth through age 5, individual variation including children with disabilities, cultural influences on development, an understanding of early brain development
	PHYSICAL: Candidate uses a variety of developmentally appropriate equipment, learning experiences and teaching strategies to promote the physical development (fine motor and gross motor) of all children. COGNITIVE: Candidate uses a variety of developmentally appropriate learning experiences and teaching strategies to promote curiosity, reasoning, and problem solving and to lay the foundation for all later learning. Candidate implements curriculum that promotes children's learning of important mathematics, science, technology, social studies, and other content goals. COMMUNICATION: Candidate uses a variety of developmentally appropriate learning experiences and teaching strategies to promote children's language and early literacy learning, and help them communicate their thoughts and feelings verbally and nonverbally. Candidate helps dual-language learners make progress in understanding and speaking both English and their home language. CREATIVE: Candidate uses a variety of developmentally appropriate learning experiences and teaching strategies for children to explore music, movement, and the visual arts, and to develop and express their individual creative abilities.	SUBJECT AREA 2: Advancing children's physical and intellectual development Examples: Large and small muscle, language and literacy, discovery, art, music, mathematics, social studies, science, technology, and dual language learning SUBJECT AREA 8: Understanding principles of child development and learning Examples: Typical developmental expectations for children from birth through age 5, individual variation including children with disabilities, cultural influences on development, an understanding of early brain development
GOAL III: To support social and emotional development and provide positive guidance	SELF: Candidate develops a warm, positive, supportive, and responsive relationship with each child, and helps each child learn about and take pride in their individual and cultural identity. SOCIAL: Candidate helps each child function effectively in the group, learn to express feelings, acquire social skills, and make friends, and promotes mutual respect among children and adults. GUIDANCE: Candidate provides a supportive environment and uses effective strategies to promote children's self-regulation and support acceptable behaviors, and effectively intervenes for children with persistent challenging behaviors.	SUBJECT AREA 3: Supporting children's social and emotional development Examples: Adult modeling, self-esteem, self-regulation, socialization, cultural identity, conflict resolution SUBJECT AREA 8: Understanding principles of child development and learning Examples: Typical developmental expectations for children from birth through age 5, individual variation including children with disabilities, cultural influences on development, an understanding of early brain development

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GOAL IV: To establish positive and productive partnerships with families	FAMILIES: Candidate establishes a positive, responsive, and cooperative relationship with each child's family, engages in two-way communication with families, encourages their involvement in the program, and supports the child's relationship with their family.	SUBJECT AREA 4: Building productive relationships with families Examples: Parent involvement, home visits, conferences, referrals, communication strategies
		SUBJECT AREA 8: Understanding principles of child development and learning Examples: Typical developmental expectations for children from birth through age 5, individual variation including children with disabilities, cultural influences on development, an understanding of early brain development
GOAL V: To ensure a well-run, purposeful program that is responsive to participants	PROGRAM MANAGEMENT: Candidate is a manager who uses observation, documentation, and planning to support children's development and learning and to ensure effective operation of the classroom or group. The Candidate is a competent organizer, planner, record keeper, communicator, and a cooperative co-worker.	SUBJECT AREA 5: Managing an effective program Examples: Planning, record keeping, reporting, community services
		SUBJECT AREA 7: Observing and recording children's behavior Examples: Tools and strategies for objective observation and assessment of children's behavior and learning to plan curriculum and individualize teaching, developmental delays, intervention strategies, individual education plans
		SUBJECT AREA 8: Understanding principles of child development and learning Examples: Typical developmental expectations for children from birth through age 5, individual variation including children with disabilities, cultural influences on development, an understanding of early brain development
GOAL VI: To maintain a commitment to professionalism	PROFESSIONALISM: Candidate makes decisions based on knowledge of research-based early childhood practices, promotes high-quality in child care services, and takes advantage of opportunities to improve knowledge and competence, both for personal and professional growth and for the benefit of children and families.	SUBJECT AREA 6: Maintaining a commitment to professionalism Examples: Advocacy, ethical practices, workforce issues, professional development, goal setting, networking
		SUBJECT AREA 8: Understanding principles of child development and learning Examples: Typical developmental expectations for children from birth through age 5, individual variation including children with disabilities, cultural influences on development, an understanding of early brain development

REFERENCES

Council for Professional Recognition. July 2024. *The Child Development Associate® National Credentialing Program and CDA® Competency Standards*. (Preschool ed). Washington, DC.

Council for Professional Recognition. 2023. *Essentials for Working with Young Children*. (3rd ed). Washington, DC.