



BLUEPRINT for Maryland's FUTURE

Helpful Resources

- **CDA Credentialing Process Overview.** This document provides an overview of preparing to obtain the CDA certification.
- Download the **CDA Assessment & Credentialing System: Everything You Ever Wanted to Know!** PowerPoint presentation (PDF).
- Watch the **CDA Assessment & Credentialing System: Everything You Ever Wanted to Know!** recorded webinar.
- **CDA Funding Application.** This application is for early childhood educators seeking financial support to earn the CDA credential. The Maryland Family Network provides guidelines for creating your CDA profile, applying for CDA funding through MSDE, and using it to pay for your CDA credential. You can also refer to the **3 Easy Steps to Apply For CDA Funding** for assistance.



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Licensure for Paraeducators

One of the most significant expansions to Maryland's education system is the expansion of early childhood education programs. This expansion increases funding for more providers, both public and private, to offer full-day preschool programs and also enhances the preparation for pre-k educators.

Among the changes are higher standards for public and private programs, which includes a public rating by the Maryland EXCELS program and a system to determine program eligibility based on a student's age and household income.

Built into the Blueprint are rigorous new standards required for both public and private programs and educators. Beginning in the 2025-2026 school year, all pre-k teachers must be state certified in early childhood education or hold a bachelor's degree and be pursuing residency through the Maryland Approved Alternative Preparation Program.

Beginning in the 2025–2026 school year, paraeducators must hold a Child Development Associate (CDA) certificate or an associate degree. A high school degree is the current qualification for a pre-k aide. See the infographic on the reverse for the path to CDA certification.

How much does a CDA certificate it cost?

The Maryland State Department of Education is partnering with the Council for Professional Recognition to support paraeducators with scholarships to get their CDA. See the resources below to learn more scholarships and funding your CDA.

Course costs range from \$1,000 to \$1,300, plus registration fees and books, plus up to \$500 to take the assessment.

- \$425 initial online application fee
- \$125 renewal online application fee
- \$33 for *Child Development Associate® National Credentialing Program* and *CDA® Competency Standards* for preschool, infant-toddler, or family child care. Shipping is included in the cost of the required standards book.

Learn more about the Blueprint for Maryland's Future at marylandeducators.org/Blueprint.



The Path to Your CDA

WHAT DO YOU NEED?



A CDA professional portfolio with all required documents.



480 hours of professional work experience in a center-based or same type of program setting with children three to five years old.



120 hours of formal early childhood education for the setting where you work (infant/toddler, pre-school, or family childcare) with a minimum of 10 hours in each of the eight CDA subject areas.

The subject areas include:

- Planning a safe, healthy learning environment
- Advancing children's physical and intellectual development
- Supporting children's social and emotional development
- Building productive relationships with families
- Managing an effective program
- Maintaining a commitment to professionalism
- Observing and recording children's behavior
- Understanding principles of child development and learning



A meeting with a CDA professional development specialist to review your portfolio and observe your work.

The CDA PD specialist will:

- Conduct a verification visit
- Review the portfolio
- Conduct an observation
- Submit a score recommendation to the Council for Professional Recognition



Once the eligibility has been met, the CDA verification visit has been conducted, and the CDA exam has been completed, the results will be reviewed to render a credentialing decision.

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