



Leveraging the CDA® to Enhance ECE Registered Apprenticeship Programs

The relationship between the CDA® and ECE registered apprenticeship is strong.

Apprenticeships are an “earn and learn” model in which participants earn wages while learning on the job. Participation in child care apprenticeships is popular—and growing. As of September 2024, the U.S. Department of Labor’s RAPIDS database includes 257 sponsors of Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) in the ECE field. While apprenticeship will not solve the child care industry’s workforce challenges on its own, it is primed to serve as the kind of solution that can boost recruitment and retention rates.

The CDA® is the perfect step on the career pathway for apprenticeships and is part of many apprenticeship programs, such as Pennsylvania’s [CDA-to-Associate's program](#) and the [Maryland Early EdCorp Apprenticeship Program](#). The Child Development Associate® (CDA) Credential™ is the most widely recognized credential in early childhood education (ECE) and is the best first step on the path of career advancement in ECE. The distinctive CDA credential is the only nationally recognized, portable, reciprocal, competency-based credential of its kind in the country. It is uniquely positioned to support apprenticeships, as it can be awarded at any point in the apprenticeship program once the credentialing requirements are met. The CDA incorporates elements that are very similar to apprenticeship, making the CDA a very good fit for early childhood education apprenticeships.

This synergy starts with the key components of both the CDA® and registered apprenticeships...

Key Components	CDA® Credential	Registered Apprenticeships
National, Industry-Recognized Credential	✓	✓
On the Job Training	✓	✓
Related Technical Instruction/Education	✓	✓
Hours of Work Experience	✓	✓
Mentorship	Recommended, but not required	✓
Portfolio Development	✓	
Verification Visit	✓	
Exam	✓	

...and goes deep into the competencies and content both CDA® candidates and apprentices are required to learn.



Mapping CDA® Competency Standards to Work Activities in Registered Apprenticeships

The competencies CDA® candidates are required to learn align with the work activities laid out by the Department of Labor (DOL) for both apprenticeable occupation codes for early childhood education, [Child Care Workers](#) and [Preschool Teachers](#). This alignment showcases how deeply the CDA fits a critical component of apprenticeships: the skills that apprentices are expected to master for successful program completion.

CDA® Competency Standard	DOL Work Activity Examples
GOAL I - To establish and maintain a safe, healthy learning environment	Arrange child care or educational settings to ensure physical safety of children
	Provide for basic needs of children
	Assist students with special educational needs
	Develop daily schedules for children
	Monitor activities of individuals to ensure safety or compliance with rules
GOAL II - To advance physical and intellectual competence	Modify teaching methods or materials to accommodate student needs
	Develop educational or training programs
	Plan educational activities
	Teach daily living skills or behaviors
	Develop instructional objectives
GOAL III - To support social and emotional development and to provide positive guidance	Apply multiple teaching methods
	Read to students
	Provide counsel, comfort, or encouragement to individuals
	Establish rules or policies governing student behavior
GOAL IV - To establish positive and productive relationships with families	Monitor student behavior, social development, or health
	Display student work
	Provide counsel, comfort, or encouragement to families
GOAL V - To ensure a well-run, purposeful program that is responsive to participant needs	Discuss child development and behavior with parents or guardians
	Discuss student progress with parents or guardians
	Maintain client information or service records
	Maintain student records
	Perform human resources activities and administrative tasks
GOAL VI - To maintain a commitment to professionalism	Collaborate with other teaching professionals to develop educational programs
	Prepare reports detailing student activities or performance
	Attend training sessions or professional meetings to develop or maintain professional knowledge
	Serve on institutional or departmental committees
	Supervise student research or internship work