

# **A Look at T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® IOWA and the CDA Credential**

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## **Basic CDA and Background Information**

### **What is a CDA credential?**

The Child Development Associate (CDA) credential is a credential awarded to professionals in the early childhood education upon their completion of the CDA process and assessment. This credential is earned from the Council for Professional Recognition in Washington, D.C.

### **What are the requirements for a CDA credential?**

In order to begin the application process, you must be at least 18 years or older and have at least a high school diploma or GED. You also must have at least 480 hours of experience working with children in the past five years. Lastly, you must have 120 clock hours of formal child care education within the past five years. These 120 hours can come in the form of college credit, training from another organization or agency, or a combination of the two.

The education requirement requires at least ten hours of training in each of the following content 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 commitment to professionalism
- 7) Observing and recording children's behavior
- 8) Principles of child development and learning

During the application process the CDA candidate must document evidence of their competence in three ways:

- 1) Prepare a professional resource file
- 2) Complete parent option questionnaires
- 3) Have an advisor complete the CDA Assessment Observation Instrument

With documentation of the above three in place, the candidate sends in this information along with their training documentation and a verification visit is set up by the Council for Professional Recognition. During the verification visit, a Council Representative tests the candidate's knowledge by administering a written test and an oral interview.

If a candidate meets all requirements and passes their verification visit, they are awarded the CDA credential.

### **How do you renew a CDA credential?**

The CDA credential is valid for three years from the time it is awarded. After that it can be renewed and is valid for five years from the renewal date. The renewal process has several requirements, but the main requirement is that the candidate must have 4.5 Continuing Education Units (CEUs) or a 3-credit-hour college course in early childhood education/child development, etc.

### **What are the benefits of having a CDA credential?**

Earning a CDA credential is a great motivator for caregivers to continue their education and advance in their careers. Many candidates who receive a CDA credential, go on to work towards college degrees. CDA credentials are nationally recognized and demonstrate your competence in working with young children. Having a CDA credential also increases your career opportunities as well as possibly helping you receive a wage increase at your current job. Having a CDA credential is also beneficial in Iowa because it can help earn points on Iowa's Quality Rating System and is part of the process of achieving some accreditation standards.

### **How many people have a CDA credential?**

Every year nearly 15,000 people apply for a CDA credential. Since the program began in 1985, over 200,000 people have obtained a CDA credential. In Iowa, over 2,000 people have obtained a CDA credential. T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Iowa has provided CDA scholarships to over 500 people since 2003 to aid them in applying for a CDA credential.

### What does the CDA scholarship include?

Recipients of a CDA Scholarship through T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Iowa receive 85% of their application fee (\$276.25) as well as a \$200 bonus upon receipt of the credential. These recipients sign a contract saying they will continue to work in Iowa in the early childhood field for at least 6 months after receiving the credential. The contract confirms their commitment to early childhood.

### The Current Study

#### What is being examined by the current study?

In this study, we sent surveys to all the current and former recipients of a CDA scholarship to gather data on various topics such as whether they applied for the CDA credential with college credit, if they actually obtained their CDA credential, and if they are still working in the early childhood field.

#### What was the sampling method for the data shown?

Surveys with instructions were sent electronically to the group of recipients. If there was no current e-mail listed in the recipient database, a postcard (with postage paid) was sent in a letter with instructions to the remaining recipients. For those who did not respond electronically within the allotted time period (a little over 10 days), a postcard and letter were sent to their mailing address. For those who did not respond to the survey electronically or by mailing the survey postcard back, the most recent data about the recipient from the T.E.A.C.H. database was entered by provided that there had been contact with the recipient in the past six months. Note that not every respondent answered every question, so the number of responses for each question is denoted in the survey results section.

Of the total number of CDA Scholarships awarded, the status of the contracts ranges from pending, active, completed, withdrawn, and dropped.

For the purposes of our study, the following data includes only those who have a CDA contract status of completed.

**What did the survey look like?** Below is a copy of the survey that was distributed:

<b>CDA Credential Survey</b>	Name: _____
Did you complete the full 120 hours of training? Yes [ ] No [ ]	
Did you apply for your CDA credential using college credit? Yes [ ] No [ ] Using training hours? Yes [ ] No [ ]	
If college, did you complete the classes with the same instructor and group of students? Yes [ ] No [ ]	
Have you received your CDA credential? Yes [ ] No [ ]	
Renewed your CDA credential (if 3 years have passed)? Yes [ ] No [ ] N/A [ ]	
What is the official date on your CDA credential? _____	
Have you worked toward a college degree since receiving your CDA credential? Yes [ ] No [ ]	
Completed a degree? Yes [ ] No [ ] Name of degree completed _____ AS [ ] AA [ ] AAS [ ]	
Are you with the same employer that you were when you received your CDA credential? Yes [ ] No [ ]	
If not, are you still working in the early childhood field? Yes [ ] No [ ]	
Where do you work? Child Care Center [ ] Family Child Care [ ] Preschool [ ]	

## **Examining Survey Results**

### **Question 1: Did you complete the full 120 hours of training?**

This question aims to find out if the recipients were successful in completing their college classes or other trainings to meet the requirement 120 clock hours of formal child care education, with at least 10 hours in each of the eight content areas.

Number of respondents: 407

Completed 120 Clock Hours (Checked Yes)	100%
Did Not Complete 120 Clock Hours (Checked No)	0%

### **Question 2: Did you apply for your CDA using college credit? Using training hours?**

This question examines the percentage of people who use college credit compared to those who use training hours. There were respondents who indicated they used both training and college credit, but in these cases college credit is usually the main source. As such, we are showing those who applied with college credit as a category, which includes those who indicated using both credit and noncredit sources. The other category, noncredit, includes those who checked only the box indicating that training hours were used to apply for the CDA credential.

Number of respondents: 285

Credit	70%
Noncredit (trainings)	30%

### **Question 3: Did you complete the classes with the same instructor and group of students?**

This question aims to identify whether the recipient was part of a CDA cohort of classes. A cohort represents a group that takes a group of classes together, which fulfill the education requirement for the CDA credential. Currently, these cohorts are offered at Des Moines Area Community College and Southwestern Community College and include four classes taken over the span of one year. Many recipients of T.E.A.C.H. scholarships opt to be in cohorts as a way to obtain their CDA credential and continue on to an associate's degree.

Number of respondents: 253

Yes	62%
No	38%

### **Question 4: Have you received your CDA credential? Renewed your CDA credential (if 3 years have passed)?**

This question identifies those who completed their CDA application process and were actually granted their CDA credential. This could be considered the "pass rate" for CDA scholarship recipients. The second part of this question looks at those who have had their CDA credential for the full three years and have renewed it or are in the process of renewing it.

#### Part 1

Number of respondents: 387

Yes	95%
No	5%

#### Part 2

Number of respondents who have had a CDA credential for over three years: 70 (needing renewal)

Have renewed	14%
Have not renewed (CDA credential no longer valid)	86%

**Question 5: What is the official date on your CDA credential?**

This question simply gives us the break-up by date of when recipients obtained their CDA credential.

Number of respondents:

2004	8	(2%)
2005	36	(9%)
2006	23	(6%)
2007	88	(22%)
2008	95	(23%)
2009	118	(29%)
2010	20	(5%)

**Question 6: Have you worked toward a college degree since receiving your CDA credential?**

This question identifies all those people who have taken classes toward earning a college degree since completing the CDA process. This includes those working toward an associate’s or a bachelor’s degree. This is a good indicator of those people who used the CDA credential as a starting point to further their education and move forward as a professional.

Number of respondents: 368

Yes	36%
No	64%

**Question 7: Have you completed a degree? If so, what degree?**

This simply identifies those who have obtained some kind of college degree since completion of the CDA process. It also identifies the degree so we can get a better idea of what types of degrees are typically obtained by CDA credential recipients.

Part 1

Number of respondents: 407

Completed a degree	5%
Not yet completed a degree	95%

Part 2

Number of respondents: 19

College diploma: 2

AA: 5	Name of degree-	
AS: 6	Early Childhood Education	10
AAS: 1	Elementary Education	1
BA: 5	Human Services	1
BS: 0	General Studies	4
	Other/Unrelated	3

**Question 8: Are you with the same employer that you were when you received your CDA credential?**

This question looks at whether the person is still employed by the same center, or still providing family child care, as they were when they received their CDA credential. T.E.A.C.H. CDA scholarship contracts require a 6-month commitment, and this question gives us a good idea of how committed the caregivers are to their centers or family child care homes.

Number of respondents: 371

Yes	76%
No	24%

### **Question 9: Are you still in the early childhood field?**

Here we combine two groups to get our yes category. Those who responded 'yes' to question 8, because they are clearly still in the field if they are in their same setting, and those who responded 'no' to question 8 and yes to question 9. This new 'yes' category incorporates off of the CDA scholarship recipients who are currently providing care in the early childhood field. The no category simply includes those who checked 'no' for question 9.

Number of respondents:	335
Still working in early childhood	92%
No longer working in early childhood	8%

### **Question 10: Where do you work?**

This final question gives a break-up of which settings in early childhood people are currently working in. Note that some people indicated that they work in a child care center and within that center also provide preschool care. These people are included in the child care center category.

Number of respondents:	407
Child Care Center	54%
Family Child Care	33%
Preschool	13%

\*For those no longer in the field, these settings represent what settings they served when they were actively in the field.

Number of respondents:	308
Of those currently in the field...	
Child Care Center staff—	47% (145)
Family Child Care Providers—	37% (113)
Preschool staff—	16% (50)

## **Integrating the Data**

In the last section, the data received from the survey was displayed in terms of results for each individual question. In this section we will explore the meaning of those results as we interpret different categories in terms of how they compare with others. By combining certain results and exploring answers to multiple questions from the same individual, we can begin to see basic correlations and perhaps infer some of the causes.

### **Examining the effectiveness of college credit/cohorts**

Number of respondents:	407
*These respondents answered questions 2, 3, and 4 (part 1) from above	
Percentage who applied using...	
Credit from a cohort	60% (243)
Other college credit	10% (42)
Noncredit	30% (122)

Number of respondents: 285

Of those who completed the CDA for college credit...

Those who participated in a cohort 85%

Received the CDA credential 93%

Continued their education 38%

Number of respondents who used college credit with a cohort: 245

Successfully obtained their CDA credential 95%

Number of respondents who used other college credit: 42

Successfully obtained their CDA credential: 100%

Number of respondents who didn't use college credit: 122

Successfully obtained their CDA credential: 93%

**Other notes:**

- ◆ All recipients completed the coursework in order to be eligible for the scholarships, but we did also collect data on those who are currently in the process, awaiting the verification visit. We did not report out on those recipients who are awaiting their visits.
- ◆ If a recipient used college credit or a combination of the two, we marked their training hours as college.
- ◆ A cohort is a term that is used to define going through the training process with a set group of individuals.
- ◆ Some respondents did not answer all of the questions.
- ◆ An assumption was made that if an individual left the renewal question blank and did not provide a new date, they did not renew their credential.
- ◆ Of the 40 recipients who we were unsuccessful in contacting, most of the information was obtained through our documentation and/or from their sponsoring center (if applicable).