

CDA: What Do I Have to Do with It?
Role of the Program Administrator in the CDA Credentialing Process
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INFANT/TODDLER PROGRAM TIPS

- 1. The areas your room should be safe, free from hazards. Good health should be promoted.**
 - a. Sharp comers should be covered.
 - b. Flimsy shelving should be removed.
 - c. Electrical cords should be wound up out of reach.
 - d. Mini-blind cords should be secured to the tops of windows.
 - e. Small items that could be ingested should not be left out on tables or on the floor.
 - f. Cleaners and chemicals should be out of the reach of children.
 - g. Area rugs should be secured to the floor to prevent tripping.
 - h. Caregivers need to wash their hands before handling food, after assisting children in the restroom, and after wiping noses.
 - i. Toys should be continually washed and sanitized throughout the day, as they are "mouthed" by the children.
 - j. High chairs are washed and sanitized after each use, including the seat, frame, and tray.
 - k. Close supervision should be maintained at all times. Teachers should always position themselves so that they have full view of the room, and never turn their backs on the children.
 - l. The room should be generally clean and tidy.
 - m. Restroom(s) should be sanitized daily. There should be liquid soap and disposable towels available for the children's use, as well as low sinks, so toddlers can learn to wash their hands independently.
 - n. Covered, plastic lined trash cans should be available, one specifically for soiled diapers. Remove the soiled diapers often, so there is never an odor permeating the diapering area or room.
 - o. Be familiar with use safe sleeping positions with infants (side or back placement).
 - p. Keep blankets, quilts, and toys out of cribs.
 - q. Children should be fully attended on a changing table. Make sure all supplies needed are within reach prior to beginning a diaper change.
 - r. Make sure there are no cracks or tears on the surface of the changing table pad, even if a sheet of paper is used under the child when diapering. Do not use any type of tape in an attempt to repair it. Just replace it.
 - s. Label each child's box of moist diaper wipes and diaper rash cream with his name, to avoid cross contamination.
 - t. Children should have separate storage for their own belongings. Never store belongings in a child's crib.
 - u. There should be a simple escape route posted near the door.
 - v. A chart of CPR and First Aid procedures should be posted.
 - w. There should be a First Aid Kit readily available in your room. If it is in a cabinet, the outside of the cabinet should be labeled "First Aid" to indicate where it is located.
 - x. At least one fully-charged fire extinguisher should be available nearby, and you should be trained in its use.

- y. Functioning smoke detectors should be installed.
- z. Good nutrition should be the focus of snacks and meals served. Processed foods and junk foods should not be served. Fruit juice, water, or milk should be the only choices. No Kool-Aid or soda. Teachers should not have sodas or snack foods in the classrooms for themselves.
- aa. When the children eat, the teachers should be sitting at the tables with them, modeling good table manners, encouraging them to try new foods, and engaging them in pleasant conversation.
- bb. Keep each child's formula labeled in the refrigerator. Half-used bottles or baby food jars should not be seen sitting around the room, but should be discarded promptly after feeding.
- cc. Infants are held for feedings. They should not be in an infant seat or crib with a propped bottle at any time.

2. Your room should be set up specifically for children.

- a. There should be a number of "centers" set up for the children. These may include a Block Area, a Dramatic Play or Housekeeping Area, a Book Comer, and a table or two for creative art or manipulatives.
- b. There should be ample periods of free choice time offered daily when toddlers are free to choose among these centers.
- c. Children should not be "herded" as a large group, from one activity to another. For example, the entire group should not sit down at a table to do an art project. Art should be one of the options for 2 or 3 children, during free choice time.
- d. The surroundings should be bright, cheerful, and inviting to children. There should be lots of the children's art displayed at the children's eye level. Some may be suspended from the ceiling. You may also have interesting posters and mobiles.
- e. There should be child-sized furniture for the children. This would include tables and chairs.
- f. There should be age-appropriate toys and materials for young infants, mobile infants, or toddlers, depending on the age group in your care. These should be stored on low shelves, which are easily accessible and can be easily put away by the children.
- g. Provide duplicates of popular toys, to discourage conflicts.
- h. There should be opportunities for dramatic play. You may have a child-size kitchen set, doll beds, dolls, dress-up clothes, and other props.
- i. There should be a set of building blocks, preferably wood unit blocks, available to the children. The Block Area would include props to encourage creative play, such as people or animal figures.
- j. There should be some kind of "Book Comer" or shelves with cloth and board books that very young children can look at whenever they like. These may be from your own collection, or borrowed weekly from the public library. There should also be other literacy materials available, as the children show readiness for them, such as child-sized pencils, various types of papers, washable markers, chubby crayons, etc.
- k. The environment should be literacy-rich. The items in the room should be labeled wherever possible. (For example, a small sign on the door that says "door".)
- l. Children should be read to liberally every day.
- m. Include a variety of music in the environment, including singing.
- n. Spend time with individual children, on their level, at every opportunity, engaging them in play.
- o. Move infants to different areas of the room throughout the day, changing their position and perspective.
- p. Provide safe, open floor space for exploration and movement.

- q. Provide items that encourage independence for toddlers, such as step stools at the sink and Velcro closures on paint smocks.
- r. Talk with individual children as you work through their daily routines, encouraging them to listen and respond. Use these times as opportunities for verbal interaction and bonding.
- s. Practice primary care giving, whenever possible.
- t. Cultural diversity should be promoted through multi-ethnic/racial dolls and pretend foods of other cultures in the Housekeeping Area, posters reflecting differences, and a collection of multicultural children's books.
- u. Both boys and girls should have opportunity and be encouraged to play in all areas of the room, free from sexual bias.
- v. Adaptations and accommodations should be made for children with special needs.

3. There should be opportunities for both large and small motor development, as well as cognitive development.

- a. There should be age-appropriate manipulatives, puzzles, stacking/sorting toys, interlocking blocks, play dough, etc.
- b. There should be a safe place for the children to engage in outdoor play, with age-appropriate equipment, such as a climber, swings, slide, riding toys, balls, etc.
- c. Infants should be provided with time outdoors, whenever weather permits.
- d. There should be alternative indoor, large motor activities available in case of inclement weather.
- e. Infants should be given periods of "tummy time" every day, on a floor surface, under close supervision.

4. Children should have opportunities for creative activities on a daily basis, utilizing

- a. An easel with paint.
- b. Open-ended, process art activities, such as collage, free-form cutting and pasting, or finger painting. No crafts or coloring book pages.
- c. Infants should be provided with objects to bat and kick; toys that respond to touch and movement.

5. Children should have the opportunity to learn through play, with hands-on activities.

- a. Learning about colors, for example, should be done by manipulating real items of different colors, not by drill or flashcards.
- b. Learning shapes and numbers should be done by tactile experiences or games, not through flashcards or drill.
- c. There should be opportunities for many sensory activities, such cooking, playdough, handling different textures, visual discrimination, etc.
- d. Absolutely no worksheets.
- e. Discovery, exploration, and problem-solving should be encouraged.
- f. Children's varied learning styles and abilities are respected and supported, by individualizing the activities.

6. Children should have regular, short, age-appropriate group or circle activities, as well as individual interactions, which encourage socialization between teacher and children and between the children themselves.

- a. games
- b. movement activities
- c. story reading
- d. storytelling

- e. flannel board stories
- f. fingerplays
- g. music
- h. no drills, flashcards, or memorizing
- i. no videos or television.
- j. Cribs should be utilized only for sleeping. Infants should be out of the crib when awake, being held by the caregiver, placed in a swing for short periods, or positioned on a prepared area of the floor to play and exercise.
- k. Infant seats, bouncers, and mechanical swing devices should not be overused or used as a substitute for human contact.

7. Children should have predictable routines, although daily activities may be flexible to suit the children's needs and interests.

- a. Greet each child and parent individually upon arrival.
- b. Use songs and games to ease transitions from one activity to the next, giving children ample notice when a change is about to occur.
- c. Have an activity planned for children who finish/transition early, so they do not have to wait for the rest of the group.
- d. Create a weekly activity plan for toddlers, based on their daily routines.
- e. Create a daily activity plan for each infant, based on individual schedule and needs. Infants should not have their schedule altered, such as being awakened from a nap to take a walk in the stroller.

8. Children should be given the opportunity to learn self-discipline, in positive, supportive ways.

- a. Establish a few, simple rules with the children. Post them, using pictures to convey ideas. They should be stated in positive terms ("Use walking Feet," rather than "Don't Run")
- b. Use redirection whenever possible with toddlers.
- c. Provide logical and natural consequences for misbehavior.
- d. Encourage children to use words to convey their feelings.
- e. Model cooperation, sharing, and proper behavior.
- f. Use soft voices with the children. Never shout.
- g. Show ample affection with each child.
- h. Expect children to help maintain the environment by having them help to pick up toys and clean up messes.
- i. Give children the opportunity to problem-solve with each other. Don't be too eager to step in.
- j. Anticipate problems before they happen, if possible, by being observant.
- k. Interact and play with the children indoors and outdoors. Teachers should not be working on lesson plans, cutting things out, chatting with co-workers, or be otherwise preoccupied while the children are present.
- l. Upon waking, infants should be responded to promptly and taken from their cribs.
- m. Be a good listener. Ask lots of open-ended questions and be patient with children as they try to respond and speak. Spend time talking with each child every day.

9. Develop a partnership with the families in your program.

- a. Communicate regularly (verbally, and through newsletters and conferences).
- b. Invite parents to become involved in your program.
- c. Maintain a Parent Bulletin Board, with upcoming activities, parenting tips, child development information, and community resources available to them.

10. Maintain a well-run and organized program.

- a. Keep up-to-date health and emergency information files on each child in your care.
- b. Develop a brochure or leaflet for parents, outlining your center's policies, goals, services offered, mission statement, etc.
- c. Take anecdotal notes on each child.
- d. Keep a portfolio for each child, which contains these notes, as well as samples of the child's art, and other evidence of skill development, that can be shared with parents.

11. Maintain a commitment to professionalism.

- a. Join a national or local early childhood organization.
- b. Observe a strict policy of confidentiality with the families in your program.
- c. Continue to improve your skills by attending workshops or classes.

These tips have been excerpted from *The CDA Prep Guide: The Complete Review Manual for the Child Development Associate Credential* (Redleaf Press). This is the only publication of its kind, providing step-by-step instruction for the entire CDA credentialing process. Visit my website for additional information and support for you and your staff: easycda.com.