

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

Here are some Program Tips to consider as you support your staff in preparing for the CDA Formal Assessment Observation. Use this checklist in conjunction with the CDA Assessment Observation Instrument that was included in the Application Packet to conduct a self-study.

1. The areas in 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. 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.
- j. The room should be generally clean and tidy.
- k. Restroom(s) should be sanitized daily. There should be liquid soap and disposable towels available for the children's use.
- l. Covered, plastic lined trash cans should be available.
- m. Children should have separate storage for their own belongings.
- n. There should be a simple escape route posted near the door.
- o. A chart of CPR and First Aid procedures should be posted.
- p. 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.
- q. At least one fully-charged fire extinguisher should be available nearby, and you should be trained in its use.
- r. Functioning smoke detectors should be installed.

2. Good nutrition should be the focus of snacks and meals served.

- a. 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.
- b. 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.

3. 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 Corner,

and a table or two for creative art or manipulatives.

There should be ample periods of free choice time offered daily when children are free to choose among these centers. 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 two or three children during free choice time.

b. 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.

c. There should be child-sized furniture for the children. This would include tables and chairs.

d. There should be age-appropriate toys and materials for preschoolers. These should be stored on low shelves, which are easily accessible and can be easily put away by the children.

e. There should be opportunities for dramatic play. You may have a child-size kitchen set, doll beds, dolls, dress-up clothes, and other props.

f. 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 small people or animal figures.

g. There should be some kind of "Book Comer" or shelves with children's books that they 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, markers, washable stamp pads and stamps, etc.

h. 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").

i. Children should be read to liberally every day.

j. 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.

k. Both boys and girls should have opportunity and be encouraged to play in all areas of the room, free from sexual bias.

l. Adaptations and accommodations should be made for children with special needs.

4. 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, playdough, 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. There should be alternative indoor, large motor activities available in case of inclement weather.

5. Children should have opportunities for creative art on a daily basis, using

a. An easel with paint.

b. Open-ended, process art activities such as collage, free-form cutting and pasting, or fingerpainting. No crafts or coloring book pages.

6. 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.

c. There should be opportunities for many sensory activities, such as cooking, playdough, handling different textures, visual discrimination, etc.

d. Absolutely no worksheets should be used.

e. There should be a variety of age-appropriate toys, materials, and activities

f. Discovery, exploration, and problem-solving should be encouraged.

g. Children's varied learning styles are respected and supported.

7. 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 (only on rare occasions)

8. 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. Have daily lesson plans and the materials to carry them out on hand when needed.

9. 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.

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.

10. Interact and play with the children indoors and outdoors.

- a. Teachers should not be working on lesson plans, cutting things out, chatting with co-workers, or be otherwise preoccupied while the children are present.
- b. Be a good listener. Ask lots of open-ended questions and be patient with children as they speak. Spend time talking with each child every day.

11. 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.

12. 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 evidences of skill development that can be shared with parents.

13.

- a. Join a national or local early childhood organization. **Maintain a commitment to professionalism.**
- 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 CDA credentialing process. Visit my website for additional information and support for you and your staff: easycda.com.