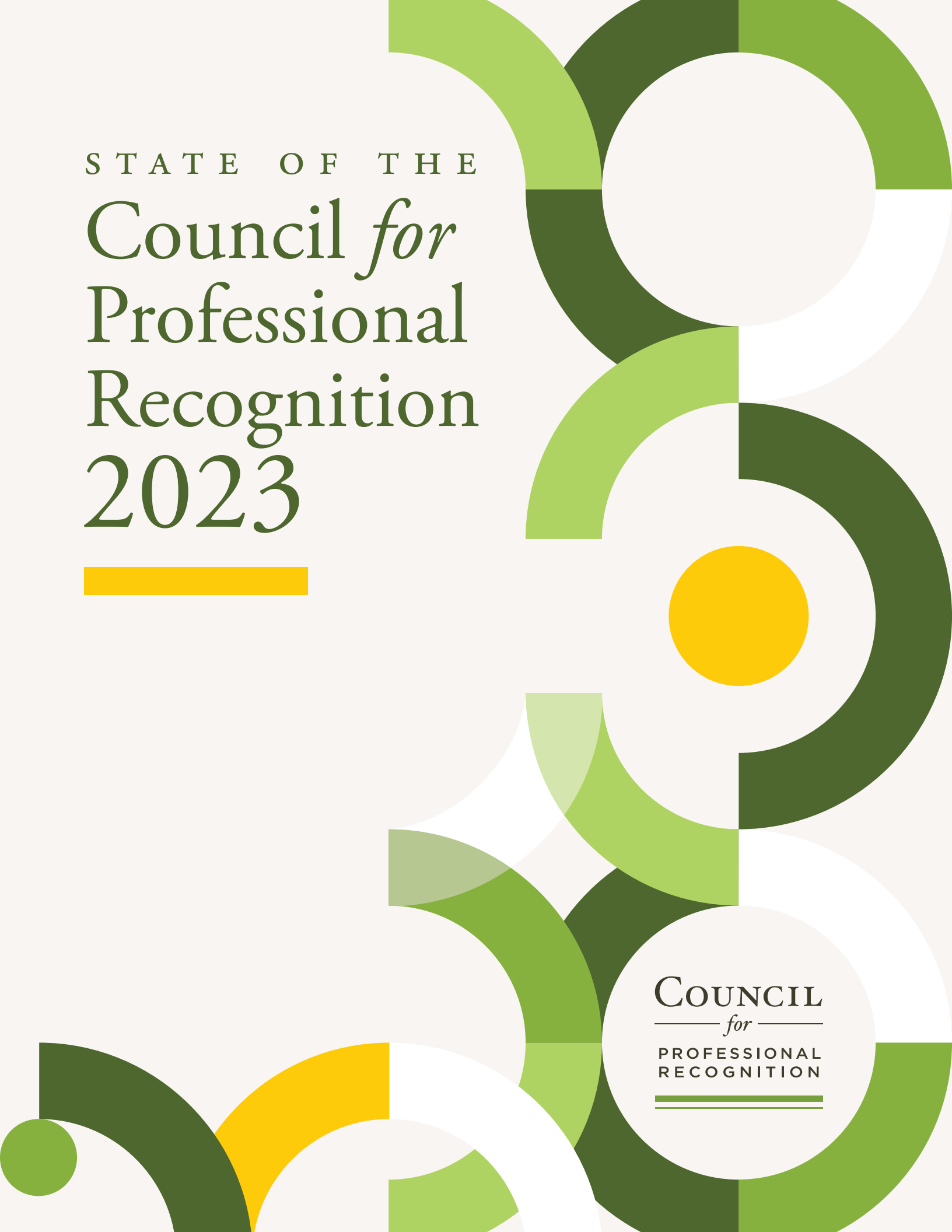


STATE OF THE
Council *for*
Professional
Recognition
2023



COUNCIL
for
PROFESSIONAL
RECOGNITION



Reflecting on Achievement

2023 IN REVIEW



I am thrilled to share the inspiring accomplishments of the Council in 2023—a period that underscored the power of strategic collaboration and advocacy. As we look back on the milestones that have guided our path, we applaud the work of our team in addressing pressing concerns in the early childhood education sector including continued workforce shortages, low wages, and equity issues.

We have issued over 45,000 Child Development Associate® (CDA) credentials last year. This served as a critical contribution to our commitment to inclusivity by offering credentials in

multiple languages, such as Spanish, Somali, Arabic, and Portuguese. The One Million CDA® Milestone, achieved in 2023, is a tangible result of our credentialing efforts and how far we have come as an organization.

Building on this momentum, our first ever independent policy agenda stands as a testament to our unwavering commitment to advocacy. We passionately advocated for increased access to the CDA credential at both national and state levels. This comprehensive agenda outlines key recommendations to strengthen and support the early childhood workforce, emphasizing the importance of workforce programs, apprenticeships, and equitable compensation.

In a strategic move grounded in collaboration, our partnership with The National Workforce Registry Alliance (NWRA) streamlines the verification of training hours for educators with CDA credentials. This collaboration not only facilitates professional development and quality initiatives but also serves as a deliberate maneuver to support our educators and enhance their career progression.

The publication of the third edition of *Essentials for Working with Young Children* reflects our dedication to equity in early childhood education. Addressing racial tensions and the shortage of early childhood educators, we partnered with the Children's Equity Project to embed equity principles in our recommendations and teachings, fostering a balanced and just learning environment.

This year, I was also overjoyed to welcome Ariel Ford and Shannon Bracamonte to our board. Their arrival brings a wealth of experience and expertise in early childhood education. Their contributions will undoubtedly broaden the Council's perspectives and actions.

We embarked on the re-introduction of the Military School-Age (MSA) Credential as a strategic move to support educators working with youth aged 5-18 in all branches of the military. This credential equips professionals to navigate the unique challenges presented by military culture, ensuring that no child is left without the support they need.

We are thrilled to announce that the Council has been awarded the 2023 Employee Engagement Top Performer Award by DecisionWise. This recognition underscores our commitment to fostering an exceptional employee experience, acknowledging the invaluable contribution our team makes to our organization's success. We are honored to be among the top 10% of organizations recognized for our outstanding levels of employee engagement. Our employee engagement survey with a 95% response rate, revealing positive insights from our staff. This guided us to implement meaningful changes in our organization's culture and policies based on valuable post-survey focus group feedback.

As we turn the pages of 2023, I reflect on the strategic leadership planning set forth last year. Our new vision, mission, goals and objectives for the next three years anchor us to face future challenges with resilience, determination, and a passion for positive change.

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'Calvin Moore, Jr.', set against a dark green background.

Dr. Calvin E. Moore, Jr.
CEO of the Council for Professional Recognition



Advancing early childhood educators' *professional growth, development and recognition.*

Mission

OF THE COUNCIL

The Council for Professional Recognition advances career pathways for Early Childhood Educators through high-quality, competency-based credentialing.

Vision

OF THE COUNCIL

The Council for Professional Recognition envisions a society where all children learn and thrive in environments led by competent, valued early childhood educators.

Role

OF THE COUNCIL

The Council's key purpose has long been to assess the knowledge and skills of professionals in the early childhood care and education field. Since 1985, we have awarded the Child Development Associate® (CDA) credential to candidates who can meet the CDA® Competency Standards, a proven measure of performance in ECE.

The CDA is our hallmark product and a first step on the pathway to a rewarding career. Still, the need to grow and learn never ends. So, we have broadened the scope of our work beyond assessing candidates for the CDA. We now also offer a wide range of resources and research, seminars and events on trending topics in the ECE field. We support early childhood educators so they can do even more to support our youngest children.

History of the CDA®

C R E D E N T I A L

In 1971, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) brought a group of early childhood education leaders together to support the expanding teacher workforce needs of the Head Start program. This effort led to a formal feasibility study of a competency-based credential that required an understanding of child development through training and practical experience.

The meetings of these progressive thinkers led to the concept of a professional credential, and in 1975, Margaret E. Wright was awarded the first CDA. With federal funding, the CDA Consortium and then Bank Street College administered the CDA. Over the next decade, the demand for the CDA grew so much that the Department of Health and Human Services worked with the National Association for the Education of Young Children to set up a separate nonprofit charged with overseeing the credential.

Since then, the Council for Professional Recognition has ramped up the CDA to meet the changing demands of the ECE field. We've added more coursework and adapted it to be inclusive by filling the needs of diverse cultures and new immigrant groups.

Much has changed since that group of early childhood leaders met in 1971. But one thing has stayed the same, the quest to increase the ranks of qualified early childhood educators where children are being served. The CDA is rooted in the core conviction that all young children have the basic right to a high-quality, equitable education. All children thrive by interacting with skilled educators, who have demonstrated their teaching competence through the attainment of the CDA a quality, competency-based credential.

According to
CDA® recipients,
earning the CDA
not only helps educators
bring out the best
in children, it also
advances their careers
and contributes to
the status of our
profession.

2023 Accomplishment

H I G H L I G H T S

Strategic Leadership

To begin 2023, the Council for Professional Recognition (the Council) initiated a strategic planning process for its 2024-2026 Strategic Plan. This comprehensive effort involved the Board of Directors and internal staff to gather diverse perspectives on the organization’s future. Beginning with an environmental assessment and SWOT analysis, stakeholders identified key focus areas. Through workshops, surveys, and coordinated meetings, the Council developed an integrated and consistent long-term plan, and engaged leaders to refine its vision, mission, and core values. The process ensured authentic representation and involvement of stakeholders in finalizing the organization’s goals and objectives.

C O N N E C T I N G W I T H O U R C O M M U N I T Y

Engagement and Outreach

Issued over 23,000 initial CDA® credentials, and over 23,000 renewals, including over 3,900 credentials in languages other than English with the top languages being Spanish, Somali, Arabic, and Portuguese. In addition, over 2,300 PD Specialists (PDS) applications were processed which contributed to the endorsement of 1,098 new PD Specialists.

To deepen engagement and outreach efforts within the ECE community, we attended over 8 national and key, local conferences where CDA content was presented in both English and Spanish and included our most popular webinars: The CDA Exam Experience, Preparation of the CDA Professional Portfolio, and CDA Overview. In addition, the credentialing team, in conjunction with Multilingual and Special Programs, traveled to Puerto Rico to provide PDS Refresher training in Spanish.

Community Engagement and Learning

In response to the need for increased engagement with vital stakeholders who share the Council’s mission to advance career pathways and support early childhood educators in obtaining their CDA credential, the community development team initiated the Early Care and Education (ECE) Investors and Affiliates Initiative. We identified 23 ECE investors representing diverse aspects of the early childhood ecosystem, including institutes of higher education, NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) state affiliates, state workforce registry organizations, national ECE training providers, and state agencies. Our inaugural ECE Investors Roundtable, a quarterly gathering of all investors, achieved 100% participation, fostering collaboration and community. To further enhance connectivity, we introduced the ECE Investors and Affiliates CAN group.

Concurrently, in support of our new NWRA/Council Partnership, the team facilitated joint sessions at the EELC and NWRA annual conferences, generating substantial interest from new states seeking to join. In 2023, three state registries formalized the agreement, and an additional 10 states are scheduled to enter in early 2024.

Making Connections – EELC and CAN

Our annual Early Educators Leadership Conference (EELC) experienced remarkable success by surpassing its registration goal and outperforming the growth rate of the previous year. With 348 registrations, the conference sold out in July, signaling increased popularity and demand compared to the previous year’s September sell-out. This achievement highlights the conference’s ability to attract a larger audience and maintain a growth trajectory. Overall, the EELC conference’s significant accomplishments in 2023 showcase its success in exceeding registration targets, demonstrating growth, and meeting increasing demand.

In addition, the Council Alumni Network (CAN) launched its Ambassadors program, which included 28 ambassadors. Some of the key achievements of CAN in fostering collaboration and growth within the network:

- Launched a new podcast and published three episodes, which received 133 views.
- Organized nine live events, including The CEHN webinar, which had the highest registration and attendance of the year, with 126 registered participants and 66 attendees.
- Established 13 micro-communities, ending 2023 with a total of 2,066 community members and a 77% active member rate.

Conference Presence

Our remarkable presence at over 33 national conferences marked a significant milestone in elevating our brand recognition and engagement within key industry gatherings and events. Through one-to-one discussions, strategic

“I think the CDA is a fantastic opportunity for teachers to become empowered and to realize their potential, and it’s the first best step toward higher education and increased professionalism in early childhood.”

—Dionne Patterson, ECE initiatives officer, Early Childhood Innovation Center at Delaware State University, Dover, Delaware

“As an advocate for all early childhood professionals, I strongly believe that the CDA gives a strong foundation to anyone entering our profession. I am a firm believer in supporting culturally and linguistically responsive programming I’m super proud of what the CDA has done for me.”

—Najwa Dahdah, CEO,
Empowered Child Care Consulting,
Inc., Detroit, Michigan

networking, and diligent post-conference follow-ups, we cultivated meaningful connections with stakeholders, fostering enduring relationships poised to propel our sector forward. Notably, our dedicated Council staff not only spearheaded dynamic presentations on key Early Childhood Education (ECE) trending topics but also actively contributed to pivotal ECE panel discussions, solidifying our impactful presence and influence within the field.

The One Millionth CDA®

Proudly celebrated the awarding of the 1 millionth CDA, marking a significant milestone in the early childhood education sector. Despite industry challenges, such as funding and staffing shortages, the CDA remains a recognized benchmark of excellence globally, symbolizing dedication and expertise in the classroom.

Jada Vargas, an 18-year-old graduate of Alchesay High School, achieved the historic milestone as the 1 millionth CDA recipient. Reflecting on her accomplishment, Vargas emphasized her surprise and excitement, pledging to honor the legacy of educators preceding her and uphold the standards that make the CDA special.

Multilingual Webinar Series

Achieved significant successes in its Multilingual Engagement and Learning programmatic activities in 2023. It completed a highly effective webinar series, providing 31 sessions in English and Spanish to over 4,200 early childhood professionals on the CDA credential. Additionally, the Council conducted eight webinars for home visitors, helping to professionalize the field and promote education opportunities. These webinars engaged nearly 500 educators. The Council also strengthened its Home Visitor Strategic Network within the Council Alumni Network, exceeding its goal of onboarding 30 CDA Professional Development Specialists™ with a home visiting specialization. By year’s end, the network included 70 members, providing an invaluable peer learning platform.

Through these accomplishments, the Council furthered equitable access to professional learning across languages and specializations.

Public Review of Proposed Revisions to the CDA® Competency Standards

As part of our continued equity work, we invited key stakeholders to participate in an open comments period for our competency standards publication for proposed equity enhancements. The 30-day comment period encouraged feedback on proposed equity enhancements. We received 64 comments (in English and Spanish). The outcomes were positive overall, with stakeholders applauding the Council for these enhancements. Comments highlighted how the changes align with current and future sector needs. Some concerns were raised regarding the measurement of equity enhancements, implementation timeframes, securing funding, and specific wording, phrasing, and definition considerations. Additionally, suggestions were made to include additional elements in competency standards. Your feedback has been instrumental in refining our approach.

ECE Observation Systems

In October, we successfully developed and launched an updated PDS Manual, now available in both English and Spanish. This achievement was made possible through extensive collaboration and engagement with Professional Development (PD) Specialists, integrating valuable insights gathered from ongoing listening tours and direct interactions. In our commitment to equitable access, we’ve revised our travel reimbursement criteria, reducing the threshold for reimbursement to alleviate financial burdens on PD Specialists traveling to remote areas. This adjustment ensures our services reach candidates in underserved regions, underscoring our dedication to inclusivity. To further enhance efficiency, we’ve introduced an online request system, simplifying the reimbursement process for PD Specialists. Moreover, acknowledging the importance of collaboration, we’ve proactively connected with key stakeholders in 8 states (NE, AK, SD, IN, MI, DE, MD, IA) facing shortages of PD Specialists.

Impact Expansion & Partnership Development

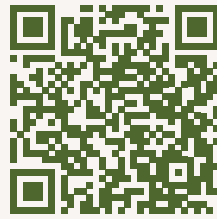
In March 2023, The Council for Professional Recognition signed a 10-year, \$2.3 million contract to continue providing training and supplies for the CDA and Military School-Age services to the Navy Child and Youth Programs in the US and selected military bases abroad. This new agreement will also replace the former CDA Advisor and Council Representative roles with our Professional Development Specialist (PDS) role and training.

In July 2023, the Maryland State Department of Education and the Council launched the MD CDA Training Initiative. This effort was re-imagined with a \$1M grant aimed at recruiting and training ECE educators within the state. Additionally, Delaware State University’s Early Childhood Innovation Center is partnering with the Council and Delaware’s Department of Education to achieve similar goals in Delaware.

ADVOCACY

Inaugural Policy Agenda

To deepen the Council's expertise and engagement in the early childhood policy landscape, we've expanded our public policy and advocacy work. In 2023, the Council released our inaugural Policy Agenda. This Agenda serves as the Council's guiding light as we advocate on behalf of the early childhood workforce and increased access to the CDA credential at the national and state levels. Review the Policy Agenda in the Appendix on page 25. To view online visit www.cdacouncil.org/government-administrators or scan the QR code.



INNOVATION

Electronic Portfolio

The electronic portfolio, an innovative e-tool, was developed to assist future candidates with the creation of their professional portfolio. This tool enables candidates to create and share their portfolios online via a custom PDF, streamlining the review process with PD Specialists in preparation for verification visits.

The new feature enhances the overall verification experience and provides users with an electronic way of displaying their work and showcasing their experience within the early childhood education sector. After concluding internal testing and content reviews, the e-portfolio is set to undergo external testing and is scheduled for a full rollout in 2024.

New Credential Opportunities

Explored new center-based credentials focusing on a Generalist Childhood Development Associate (CDA) for ages birth to five and a School-Age CDA for ages six to eight. Assessing the need, demand, and barriers of these credentials, the exploration revealed an overwhelming favor for the creation of these types of credentials. The survey found:

- 82% of current CDA holders would consider pursuing the Generalist CDA.
- 83% of credential holders and 82% of owners/directors strongly support the creation of a School-Age CDA.

The favorable results led to presenting a full proposal to senior leadership with the recommendation to move forward with the development of the Generalist CDA in 2024.

Learning Design and Experience

The National CDA Instructor Training Course was piloted in 2023. This course is a proficiency-based learning intervention that prepares CDA providers and instructors with the skills and abilities to

develop effective CDA preparation services. This curriculum increases the CDA knowledge of any individual supporting a candidate in pursuit of their credential. It is a twenty-seven (27) hour proficiency-based learning intervention that prepares CDA providers and instructors with the skills and abilities to develop effective CDA preparation services. The pilot cohort consisted of 76 participants throughout the United States, and, so far, fifty-five percent (55%) of the cohort successfully completed all course interactions including a final exam and capstone project. Additionally, pilot participants who successfully completed all course activities received 2.7 CEUs.

PDS Renewal Training Course

The LDE Team, in conjunction with the ECE Observations and Technology Departments, created and deployed a new Professional Development Specialist Renewal Training course. The training informs learners of the PD Specialist's Manual changes, best practices, and the revised Comprehensive Scoring Instrument (CSI). The training is a self-paced, web-based course deployed onto the Council's Learning Management System. The Council expects over 3,000 PD Specialists to take the training in the coming year.

RESEARCH & ASSETS

Training and Leadership Needs Assessment

The Learning Design and Experience (LDE) team also conducted a training and leadership needs assessment with Council managers and supervisors. This effort sustained two primary goals: (1) identify and document training needs across the organization, and (2) obtain insight into the most common leadership skills gaps within the staff. The team will use this data to partner with Council teams to address their training needs and incorporate feedback into the development of a leadership curriculum for Council employees. The team gathered this data by conducting sixteen semi-structured interviews with all the Council managers and

“I believe the CDA's value is providing that entry level step for people who are interested and have a passion for young children. I love that about the CDA, it really helps give early educators a starting point on their education.”

—Vail Shoultz-McCole, technical instructor of early childhood education, Colorado Mesa University, Grand Junction, Colorado

“What I like most about the CDA is it helps me work better with children, it helps me understand all the domains of the children and it helps me as well by opening more doors to having a better salary.”

—Nora Castro (translated from Spanish), bilingual instructor, Focus on Children, Inc., Bowie, Maryland

supervisors. This effort yielded a plethora of data that was chronicled in a report to be delivered to Council leaders.

CDA Verification Visit® Study

Concluded a comprehensive, one-and-a-half-year study of the verification visit process. The Council analyzed 88,500 candidate verification visit scores from 2018 to 2023, conducted interrater reliability for 39 virtual verification visits, and conducted multiple surveys and focus groups with Professional Development Specialists. The study found the verification visit is measuring the National Competency Standards appropriately and consistently across the years.

CDA® Exam

Released new multiple-choice exams for the infant-toddler, preschool, and family child care settings. The release came at the conclusion of an extensive exam refresh, which resulted in the creation of 563 new exam items and over 1,150 hours of virtual workshops and independent work with credential holders who acted as subject matter experts. The updated items ensure the CDA exams remain up to date with the latest trends in the early childhood education field and provide the highest quality credentialing experience for candidates.

Reimagining the CDA® Process – New CRM

Through feedback, it was clear that our current Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system faced integration challenges, inefficiencies, and lacked flexibility, and the best option forward was to build a new CRM. The Council determined the key requirements and enhancements needed in a new and improved CRM for stakeholders and staff, and kicked off this exciting project by engaging in discovery and selecting a vendor to build the system. The Council’s core project team began designing the new future-ready CRM to align with stakeholder needs and the Council growth aspirations. This strategic investment is designed to unveil a transformative experience, placing innovation and efficiency at the forefront.

Essentials Publication Third Edition

In June of 2023, the Council, in collaboration with the Children’s Equity Project, released an updated edition of *Essentials for Working with Young Children*. This edition, driven by a heightened commitment to equity, addresses the evolving landscape of early childhood education, emphasizing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). The textbook provides guidance on book selections, conflict resolution techniques, and effective communication with families. The Council emphasizes the new Essentials’ goal to foster skills, friendships, independence, and a sense of social justice in young learners, aiming to build a model world rooted in tolerance and inclusion. To date, we have sold over 4,000 of the new textbooks and over 3,000 of the companion workbooks, equating to over \$300K in revenue.

Thought Leadership Content Assets

Continued to create and share insightful thought leadership whitepapers, blogs, and profiles featuring accomplished CDAs and leaders in the ECE sector. The wide array of diverse topics included: “Design Thinking Approach to the CDA,” “Pre-K for All: Roadblocks and Rewards,” “The Importance of Supporting Women Owned Businesses,” and “Data and Demand” (a narrative of the 2022 CDA survey). The *Data and Demand* narrative was a featured content piece on EdWeek’s website. This important asset demonstrates the impact of the CDA in the ECE field. To date, the paper has garnered nearly 200 downloads and provided the Council with prospects to nurture and bring into the CDA community. To view the *Data and Demand* narrative online visit www.cdacouncil.org/2022-cda-credential-holders-survey-data-and-demand or scan the QR code.



CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Voice of the Customer

To further invest in its commitment to white glove customer service, the Council began collecting satisfaction feedback from candidates after four, distinct stages of their credentialing journey: (1) the initial application, (2) the verification visit, (3) the exam, and (4) the credentialing decision. To date, 89% indicated that they are satisfied with the overall credentialing experience. This ongoing, comprehensive feedback loop will allow the Council to better understand the candidate journey, identify roadblocks, and improve the credentialing process.

2023 Achievements

S N A P S H O T

Over 1 Million
educators
credentialed since 1976

.....

45,000+ educators
credentialed in 2023

.....

2023 Achievements

S N A P S H O T



89%

of candidates are
satisfied with the overall
credentialing experience



4,200+

CDA Webinar Series
attendees in English
and Spanish



300+

Pieces Translated



3,900

credentials awarded in
languages other than
English



2,302

vouchers issued in
partnership with the
MD State Dept of Ed



2,066

Council Alumni
Network (CAN)
community members

2023 Achievements

S N A P S H O T



1,098

new CDA PD Specialists™ endorsed



2.9M

Total Website Pageviews



30K+

new contacts added to Council email lists



1,700+

Media Mentions



1,176

downloads of the new CDA® Handbook for High School



5.9M

Email Campaign Opens

2023 Sector Engagement

S N A P S H O T



↑6.3%

19K Facebook fans

ENGAGEMENTS	8.3K
Impressions	850K
Page Visits	23.2K
Shares	885
POSTS	655



↑16.7%

8.8K LinkedIn followers

ENGAGEMENTS	6.9K
Impressions	204K
Comments	338
Shares	713
POSTS	633



↑1.9%

5K X (Twitter) followers

ENGAGEMENTS	1.5K
Impressions	58.9K
Mentions	217
Page Visits	3.4K
TWEETS	713



↑13.6%

1.9K Instagram followers



79*

TikTok followers

**New platform in 2023*

CDA® Testimonials & Quotes

FROM THE FIELD

“I love the CDA because it gives people the opportunity to grow in a field that really doesn’t provide many professional development options other than college. The CDA prepares ECE educators for the field and provides children with the best opportunity for a successful early outcome.”

—Jaden Wulfekuhle, CDA navigator, Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children, Urbandale, Iowa

“The CDA has the advantage of combining theory with practice, and that makes it easier for teachers to apply what they’ve learned in the classroom. A lot of early childhood education programs don’t provide this type of practical information.”

—Zuly Vazquez, national manager, Early Head Start Professional Learning Programs and doctoral student

“[The CDA] is recognized nationwide, so CDA candidates can move tomorrow and still work in the early childhood field. And earning a CDA inspires you to learn more, as I did. After earning my associate and bachelor’s degrees, I completed my master’s degree and this December [2023], I’m due to earn my doctorate.”

—Salina Washington, CDA/PD support specialist, Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education Montgomery, Alabama

“I love the CDA because it’s a very lucrative program for teachers who want to enhance their careers and make difference in teaching today’s young minds of today.”

—Renata Turner, early childhood inclusion coordinator, Step Forward, Cleveland, OH

“I think the value of the CDA is that it values the people who do the work. It validates the importance of what we do. It justifies our work in the early childhood field.”

—Amy Wood, coordinator, Hardin County Schools, Elizabethtown, Kentucky



“I am one in a million.”

Council for Professional Recognition

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“I would say that the value of a CDA is it’s a doorway. It’s a doorway into not just being a provider or educator, but it’s a stepping stone for being so much more in the lives of not just children, but families and children.”

—Inez Owens, site administrator,
Step Forward, Cleveland, OH

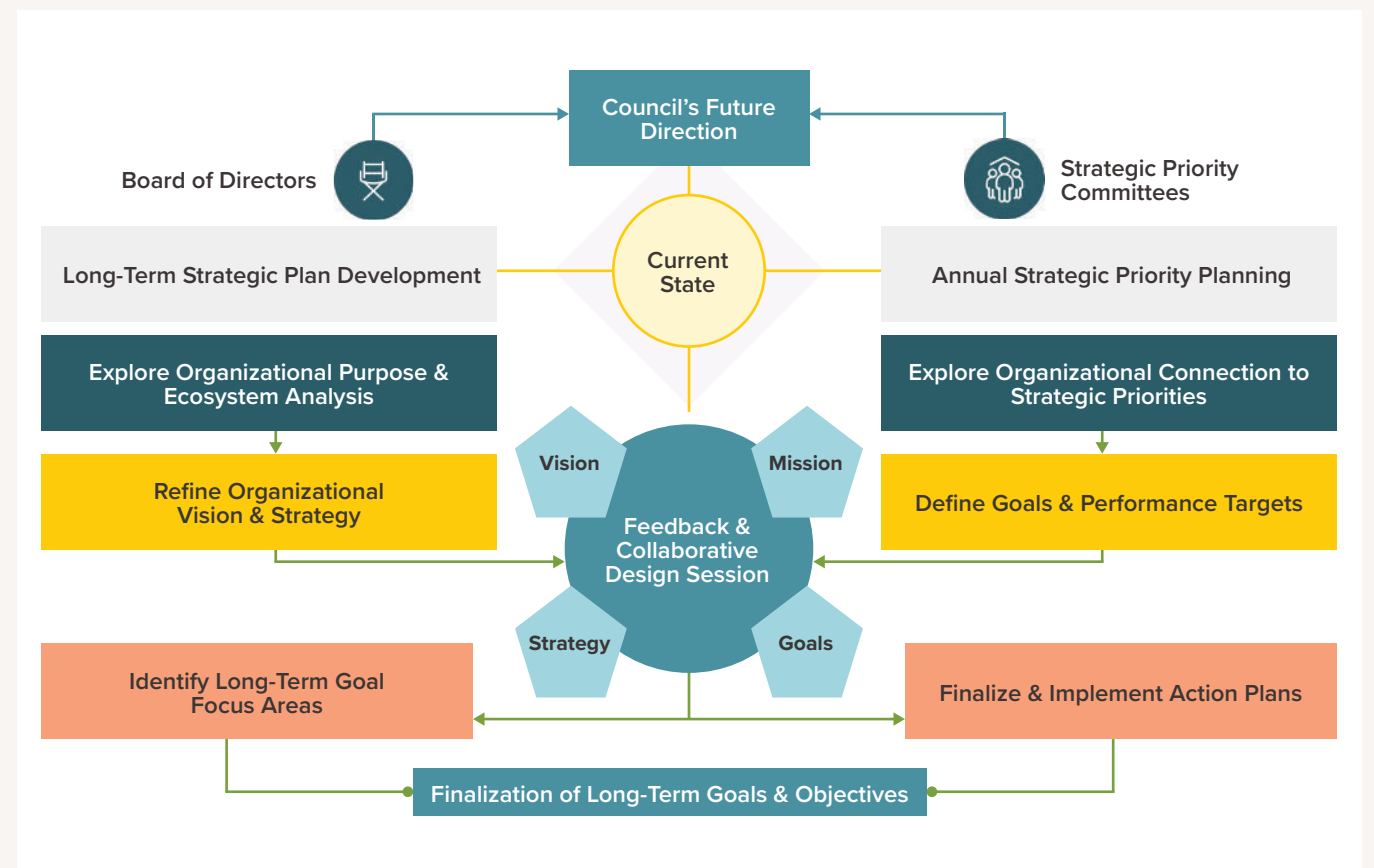
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Strategic Leadership

APPENDIX A



Policy Agenda

A P P E N D I X B

The **Council for Professional Recognition** promotes the improved performance and recognition of professionals in the care and education of children from birth to age five. We believe early childhood education is essential to the success of our economy and communities, and that all families deserve equitable access to high-quality early childhood education. However, our current child care system is fragmented and early childhood educators have long paid the price. Under-compensated and overworked, early childhood educators are the backbone of our child care system, and it is far past time they receive the compensation, access to training, and recognition they deserve.

This policy agenda serves as the Council’s guiding light as we advocate on behalf of the early childhood workforce and increased access to the Child Development Associate® (CDA®) credential at the national and state levels.

1. Increase access to the CDA and the quality of early care and education settings by supporting policies that recognize the CDA in state-level regulations and requirements as the preferred entry-level credential for early educators.

High quality early care and education is a demanding and complex responsibility. Highly effective early care and education professionals develop and deploy professional competencies that contribute to improved life-long education, employment, and health outcomes of the children in their care. The CDA credential verifies that early childhood educators have the skills they need to provide the best care to young children. By providing professional development opportunities for early educators working in a variety of settings with children ages birth to 5 years old and striving to provide quality educational opportunities that work with the needs of the field, the CDA is the most widely used credential in the field. While we pride ourselves on the affordability and accessibility of earning the CDA, we know there is more work to do. We are dedicated to uplifting policies that recognize the CDA in state-level regulations and requirements as the preferred entry-level credential for early educators, as well as provide resources to help early childhood professionals earn their CDA.

2. Increase access to credit-bearing, high-quality CDA training options for early educators by supporting policies that expand or establish workforce programs, including apprenticeships.

The field of early childhood education has long faced workforce shortages which have been exacerbated since the pandemic. To help remedy this, the field needs increased access to high-quality workforce programs and training options, including apprenticeships, that result in a CDA. The CDA is a competency-based credential that can improve developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood settings regardless of whether the teacher or caregiver has a bachelor’s degree or a GED. Not only does CDA attainment elevate professional practice, for many early childhood professionals who face barriers to post-secondary education, it is an important steppingstone to further education, including an associate’s or bachelor’s degree and beyond. Policy decisions to expand or establish ECE workforce programs must consider the unique needs of the field and not be simply lumped in as part of a “one size fits all industries” solution.

3. Increase access to early care and education career pathways for high school students by supporting policies that expand CDA career and technical education programs.

To fully address the workforce shortages facing the early childhood education field, we must focus on the need to increase access to early care and education career pathways for high school students and youth. With the right support, youth career and technical education (CTE) programs that result in a CDA can help launch a life-long career and passion for early childhood education. By fostering an interest in this work and providing high-quality training and education at an early age, not only can we help address workforce shortages, but we can also provide life-changing opportunities for young people entering the field. Policies to expand or establish youth early childhood CTE programs must consider the unique needs of the field and avoid proposing one-size-fits-all policy solutions.

4. Ensure early educators are recognized for their skills and expertise by uplifting policies that promote worthy and livable compensation.

Despite the important responsibilities of early education workers and the vital role they play in children’s ability to learn and parents’ ability to work, high turnover in the field is fueled by persistently low wages; lack of benefits, including health care; long hours; and other stressors. Additionally, early care and education continues to employ disproportionate numbers of women, particularly women of color. It is far past time these wrongs were made right. At the Council, we fiercely believe this is an equity issue and fully support and advocate for policies that promote worthy and livable compensation.

Council for Professional Recognition Awards 1 Millionth Child Development Associate® Credential™

A P P E N D I X C

For Immediate Release: September 26, 2023

WASHINGTON, DC — The Council for Professional Recognition, which is awarding the 1 millionth Child Development Associate® Credential™ (CDA), believes this achievement strengthens the entire early childhood education sector even as it deals with many challenges, including funding and staffing shortages.

The Council for Professional Recognition, a nonprofit that supports early childhood education professionals, administers the CDA®. Candidates for the CDA must successfully pass the national CDA exam that tests their knowledge of early childhood best practices based on the National CDA Competency Standards. In its 48-year history, the CDA has grown to become a recognized benchmark of excellence and the most widely recognized credential in early childhood education around the world. It’s a key stepping stone on the path of career advancement in early childhood education and signifies the dedication and expertise of professionals in the classroom.

Jada Vargas, an 18-year-old and recent graduate of Alchesay High School on the Fort Apache Reservation in Whiteriver, Arizona, is the 1 millionth person to earn the CDA. The CDA’s legacy stretches back to 1975, when Margaret E. Wright was the first person to achieve the credential.

Vargas says, “I’m really surprised and excited to be the 1 millionth person to earn a CDA — I had no idea I would be joining such a large and impressive group! I honor all of those educators who came before me and will do my best to uphold the standards that make the CDA so special.”

Vargas says she realized becoming an educator was her calling when she worked in a child care center and then began going through the CDA credentialing process. She says she learned very quickly that each child requires different types of support and interactions.

“If you want to pursue something you are passionate about, like the CDA, it is worth the effort. I believe you can do anything you put your mind to and I try not to let anyone affect my journey.”

Dr. Calvin E. Moore, Jr., the CEO of the Council for Professional Recognition, says, “We congratulate Jada on earning her CDA and being the 1 millionth person to do so. She joins a distinguished and successful group of professional educators who are well prepared to foster the social, emotional, physical and cognitive growth of young children. Having a CDA does more than just help educators bring out the best in children, it also advances their careers and contributes to the status of our profession.

Albert Wat, chair of the Council of Professional Recognition’s Governing Board and senior policy director at Alliance for Early Success, says, “Reaching the milestone of the millionth individual earning a CDA is a testament to the dedication and passion of early childhood educators. Each CDA earned represents not only a personal achievement but also a commitment to the betterment of our youngest learners’ lives. As we celebrate this significant moment, let us renew our commitment to providing high-quality care and education to every child, ensuring their potential knows no bounds.”

Dr. Joan Lombardi, who served as the first Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, says, “I congratulate the 1 million CDAs across the country for their dedication to young children and I hope they receive the recognition and support that should come with this achievement. Congratulations to the Council for Professional Recognition for supporting those who educate children every day and for reaching this important milestone.”

In congratulating Vargas and all CDAs on reaching this level of success, Dr. Moore also challenged the sector to keep reaching for greater impact. “The pandemic taught all Americans the vital importance of early childhood educators to the financial well-being of the whole economy. While we remind policymakers, business leaders and the public of that lesson, we must also encourage more and more of our colleagues to pursue a CDA because of its proven value.”

The recent CDA Holders’ Survey (www.cdacouncil.org/en/2022-cda-credential-holders-survey-data-and-demand) found:

- 73% of respondents believe the CDA credential has been beneficial for their career;
- 87% of respondents believe it made them more prepared for the classroom;
- 64% of respondents pursued the CDA credential to expand their skills;
- 79% of owners/directors believe the CDA credential makes their teachers more prepared for the classroom; and
- 80% of owners/directors said they were more likely to hire someone with a CDA credential than someone without.

The Council intends to build on the CDA’s success by introducing technological advancements; additional diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, and more research investments.



COUNCIL

for

PROFESSIONAL
RECOGNITION

2460 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20009

(800) 424-4310

Monday-Friday, 8am-7pm EST

cdafedback@cdacouncil.org
www.cdacouncil.org