



Birth to Five Setting FAQs

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General Information

What are the main differences between the new Birth to Five setting and the other settings?

(Center-based Infant/Toddler, Center-based Preschool, Family Child Care, and Home Visitor)

See the CDA® Setting Comparison Chart for credential requirements for each setting.

 CDA® Setting Comparison Chart						
CDA® Setting	Birth to Five	Infant-Toddler	Preschool	Family Child Care	Home Visitor	
Setting Location	Center-Based	Center-Based	Center-Based	Home-Based	Program-Based	
120 Clock Hours of Profession Early Childhood Education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ (including principles of adult learning)	
480 Hours of Work Experience in a Specific Age Group	Working with children birth to 5 years old (160 hours in each sub-age group)	Working with children birth to 36 months	Working with children 3-5 years old	Working with children birth to 5 years old	Working with families with children ages birth to 5 in a Home Visitor or adult education program	
CDA® Professional Portfolio	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
CDA® Exam	✓	✓	✓	✓	No exam	
CDA Verification Visit®	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Online Application & Assessment Fee	\$525	\$525	\$525	\$525	\$525	

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Why is the Council offering the new Birth to Five setting?

The Birth to Five setting for the CDA® credential was developed in response to demand from the field. The Council conducted a survey with over 1,000 respondents, and 87% indicated a need for this credential option. To earn the CDA® credential in the Birth to Five setting, individuals will demonstrate competence with a broader age range of children, increasing their job opportunities. Offering the Birth to Five setting provides flexibility that may help address staffing shortages and bridge child development knowledge across age groups.

What does the Birth to Five setting mean for the ECE field?

ECE educators can now earn a CDA® credential that verifies their ability to work with children from birth to five years of age. In a field that requires flexibility and a strong understanding of the stages of child growth and development, Birth to Five CDA® holders will have the education to adapt accordingly.

What are the sub-age groups for the Birth to Five setting?

The sub-age groups include infants (birth-17 months), toddlers (18 months-36 months), and preschoolers (3-5 years old).

When will the Birth to Five CDA® credential be open for applications?

The Birth to Five CDA® credential application will be available on August 1, 2025.

Is the cost to apply for Birth to Five the same as the other CDA® credential settings?

Yes, the cost to apply for the Birth to Five CDA® is the same as the other settings, \$525.

Will the Birth to Five CDA® credential eliminate any of the credential settings already offered?

No. The Council will continue to offer the Center-Based Infant/Toddler, Center-Based Preschool, Family Child Care, and Home Visitor settings in addition to the Birth to Five setting.

Once the Birth to Five setting is released, will candidates still have the option to apply separately for Infant/Toddler and Preschool CDA® credentials?

Yes, the center-based Infant-Toddler and Preschool settings will still be available to candidates.

Will the Birth to Five CDA® offer the same options as other settings for language specialization in languages other than English or Spanish?

Yes, the Birth to Five CDA® will offer the same language specialization options as the other CDA® settings.

How long is my Birth to Five CDA® valid?

Your credential will remain valid for three years from the issue date.

Birth to Five Requirements

What are the requirements to apply for the CDA® credential in the Birth to Five setting?

The requirements for Birth to Five align with the Council's other settings - 480 hours of experience and 120 hours of education applicable to the ages and setting. All the requirements are specified in the Birth to Five CDA® Competency Standards book, which is available for purchase in the Council Store. Here is an overview.

Birth to Five Requirements	
High School Education	You must have a valid high school diploma, a GED, or enrollment as a junior or senior in a high school career technical education program in early childhood education.
Training/Educational Hours	Candidates must complete 120 hours of coursework in the development of children aged birth to five, with at least 10 hours in each of the eight CDA® subject areas.
Work Experience	Candidates must have at least 480 hours of experience working with children aged birth to five in the past three years. This experience should include at least 160 hours—as a paid employee or volunteer— in each sub-age group within a center-based setting. <u>Sub-Age Groups</u> Infants (Birth-17 months) Toddlers (18 months-36 months) Preschoolers (3–5-year-olds) *Center directors will confirm in the application that candidates have 480 hours of experience, with at least 160 hours in each age group.
Verification Visit	Candidates will have a verification visit for the age group they currently serve.
Professional Portfolio	Candidates will complete a professional portfolio that includes all sub-age groups within the Birth to Five setting.
Exam	CDA® candidates applying for the Birth to Five Credential must take the Birth to Five Exam.

How many hours of training do I need before applying for the Birth to Five CDA®?

You must complete 120 clock hours of professional early childhood education, covering the growth and development of children aged birth to five years, with no fewer than 10 hours in each of the eight CDA® Subject Areas.

Will I need to have work experience with each sub-age group to apply for the Birth to Five CDA®?

You must have 480 hours of experience working with children aged birth to five years in a center-based setting with a minimum of 160 hours in each sub-age group - infants (birth-17 months), toddlers (18 months-36 months), and preschoolers (3-5 years old).

Is my director required to attest to my experience with all sub-age groups?

Yes, your director will attest to your experience across all sub-age groups in the director's permission statement.

Do I need an active CDA® credential to apply for the Birth to Five CDA®?

No, you do not need an active CDA® credential to apply for the Birth to Five CDA®. If you meet the requirements outlined in the chart, you can apply for the Birth to Five CDA®.

How will I receive the required forms to complete my Birth to Five portfolio?

All forms will be available in the Birth to Five CDA® Competency Standards book.

Birth to Five Competency Standards Book

Where can I purchase a copy of the Birth to Five CDA® Competency Standards book?

The Birth to Five CDA® Competency Standards book will become available in the Council Store starting August 1, 2025. If books have not been received by the warehouse, we will offer a short pre-order.

Will the book be accessible online until printed copies are available?

No, the Birth to Five CDA® Competency Standards book will be available in print only.

What is the color of the new Birth to Five CDA® Competency Standards book?

The color of the new book is magenta.

Will the CDA® Competency Standards books for other settings be updated to include information about the Birth to Five setting?

Yes, the books will be updated to include information about Birth to Five. For questions specific to the requirements of each setting, please refer to the Competency Standards book for that setting.

Can a candidate use the Infant/Toddler and Preschool CDA® Competency Standards books for the Birth to Five verification visit?

No. The candidate will need to purchase the Birth to Five CDA® Competency Standards book.

Will a candidate need to purchase both Infant/Toddler and Preschool CDA® Competency Standards books for the Birth to Five verification visit?

No. The candidate will need to purchase the Birth to Five CDA® Competency Standards book.

Will I need a Competency Standards book before my verification visit?

Yes, the Birth to Five setting will follow the same CDA® credentialing process. All candidates are required to purchase a setting-specific Competency Standards book prior to applying and have the book with them during the verification visit.

Birth to Five Exam & Verification Visit

Is there an exam for the Birth to Five CDA® credential? Will there be more questions to cover three sub-age groups and will I have more time to take the exam?

You will take the Birth to Five exam through Pearson VUE. The exam consists of multiple-choice questions, and you will have one hour and fifty-five minutes to complete the exam.

Who will conduct my verification visit?

A CDA® Professional Development Specialist™ with a Birth to Five endorsement will conduct your verification visit.

Where will my verification visit take place?

Your verification visit will take place at a state-licensed or legally exempt child development center, where the PD Specialist will observe you working with at least three children in the infant-toddler range of birth to 36 months or at least six preschoolers ranging in age from three to five years old.

Do I need to be observed with all three sub-age groups?

No, you do not need to be observed with all three sub-age groups. You will be observed in the learning environment with the group of children that you work with regularly (this may include one or more sub-age groups).

What age group will I be observed with to earn the Birth to Five CDA®?

The observation must take place in a center-based setting that is a state-licensed or legally exempt child development center. You will be observed with any or all of the following sub-age groups: infants (birth-17 months), toddlers (18 months-36 months), and preschoolers (3-5 years old). If observed with infants and toddlers, there must be at least 3 children in the birth to 36 months age range. If observed with preschoolers, there must be at least 6 children in the 3 to 5 years age range.

How long do I have to complete my exam and verification visit?

You have 6 months to complete both your exam (which is taken first) and verification visit. You must consider this time frame when scheduling your exam. Failure to complete your exam and verification visit within the 6-month time frame will result in your application expiring and the forfeiture of any fees.

Scenario-Based Questions - New CDA® Applicants

I have 480 hours of work experience, but I haven't reached the required 160 hours in every sub-age group. If I have extra hours beyond the minimum in one sub-age group, can those be applied toward the others? Or will I need to accumulate additional hours beyond 480 to meet the 160 hours requirement for each sub-age group?

To apply for the Birth to Five CDA®, candidates must meet the minimum hour requirements for each sub-age group. If candidates do not satisfy the minimum requirement of 160 hours for each sub-age group, they will need to accrue more than 480 hours.

I am in the process of submitting my application. Can I switch my setting to Birth to Five?

After the new Birth to Five setting launches (August 1, 2025), if you have not made a payment, you may switch your setting selection on your application, provided you meet all eligibility requirements. This will require purchasing a Birth to Five CDA® Competency Standards book, ensuring you have the appropriate education and experience, and creating your Birth to Five professional portfolio.

I am currently in the "Ready to Schedule" phase and I am interested in the new Birth to Five CDA®, can I request a setting change?

If you have received your "Ready to Schedule" notice and want to request a setting change, please contact our Customer Support team at 800-424-4310 for more information. Keep in mind that the eligibility requirements are setting and age group specific.

I have completed my exam and verification visit. Can I still switch to the Birth to Five setting?

Since you have already completed the setting-specific exam and verification visit, switching to the Birth to Five setting is not possible at this stage. You will need to wait for your credentialing results. Once you receive your results, you can submit a new initial application for Birth to Five, provided you meet all the prerequisites set out in the Birth to Five CDA® Competency Standards book.

Scenario-Based Questions - Active & Expired CDA® Holders

I hold an Infant/Toddler (or Preschool) CDA® credential. Can I retake courses for the other age groups and apply that education toward the Birth to Five education requirements?

You may combine courses you previously took for the Infant/Toddler (Preschool) CDA® credential with your new training, as long as all training covers the growth and development of children ages birth to five, with at least 10 hours in each of the 8 CDA® Subject Areas.

I already have an active CDA® in another setting. Can I apply for the Birth to Five CDA® credential?

Yes, you can apply for the Birth to Five CDA® credential. You will need to meet all eligibility requirements for the Birth to Five setting before applying.

I already have an active CDA® in another setting. What happens to that credential if I apply and earn the Birth to Five CDA® credential?

Nothing! You would have two credentials, one for your existing setting and the other for Birth to Five.

I currently hold an active CDA® in another setting and would like to apply for the Birth to Five CDA® credential. Do I need to take another exam?

Yes, all candidates applying for the Birth to Five CDA® will take the Birth to Five exam.

I already have an active center-based CDA® (Infant/Toddler or Preschool). Can I be observed with the same age group as in my previous setting?

You will be observed working with children in a different sub-age group from the one in which you were previously credentialed.

(a) If you have a center-based Preschool CDA® credential, you will need to be observed in the infant or toddler sub-age groups.

(b) If you have a center-based Infant/Toddler CDA® credential, you will need to be observed with the 3-5 years sub-age group.

I already created a portfolio for another setting. Can I reuse parts of my previous portfolio?

Yes, you may reuse portions of your previous portfolio, but you must create a new one that addresses all three sub-age groups. So, please ensure that you develop a portfolio to meet the requirements that are set out in the Birth to Five CDA® Competency Standards book.

I have both center-based CDA® credentials (Infant-Toddler and Preschool) that are active. Can I convert those two credentials into the Birth to Five CDA® credential?

Yes! Only active CDA® holders with credentials in both the center-based Infant-Toddler and Preschool settings can renew into the Birth to Five CDA®. When one of your active credentials is available for renewal, you can decide to renew into the Birth to Five setting or maintain your current settings. If you decide to renew to the Birth to Five setting, your previous credentials will expire at their expiration date.

- You are not required to renew your Infant/Toddler and Preschool CDA® credentials to the Birth to Five CDA®, but this option is available.

- If you choose to renew to the Birth to Five CDA®, it will replace your previous settings, and you will become eligible to renew in three years.

If a CDA® holder has one active credential, in any setting, they will need to complete an initial application for the Birth to Five CDA®.

I have an active Infant/Toddler and Preschool CDA® and want to apply for Birth to Five while maintaining my other active CDA® settings. Can I use the same training hours as before when I apply for the Birth to Five setting?

If you would like to keep both your Infant/Toddler and Preschool CDA® credentials and add the Birth to Five setting, you can likely combine your existing training hours from your Infant/Toddler and Preschool CDA® credentials toward the Birth to Five CDA®.

The Birth to Five CDA® requires that you have at least 120 hours of formal early childhood education focused on the growth and development of children aged birth to five, with at least 10 hours in each of the eight CDA® Subject Areas.

You must verify that your combined training hours fulfill the 120-hour total and include at least 10 hours in each of the eight CDA® Subject Areas, while also ensuring that the training content spans the full birth to five age range.

I have an expired CDA®. Can I use the training hours I completed previously for Birth to Five?

Yes, you can use your training hours towards Birth to Five if the courses cover the growth and development of children aged birth to five years and fall within the eight CDA® Subject Areas.

PD Specialist Questions

How will a Birth to Five candidate select a PD Specialist?

There are four ways to find a CDA® PD Specialist:

- Login to yourcouncil.org to access the Find-a-PD Specialist Tool. You can use this tool to request a local PD Specialist to conduct your verification visit. If you do not have a YourCouncil account, visit yourcouncil.org and click the option to Create an Account on the login screen.
- Ask someone you know who is already a PD Specialist with a Birth to Five endorsement.
- Ask an early childhood professional in your community to become a PD Specialist, directing them to yourcouncil.org to learn more and apply to take online training to serve in the role. (Note: This option may significantly delay your credentialing timeline as the approval process may take up to 60 days.
- If none of the above methods work, you may call the Customer Support team at 800-424-4310 or email the ECE Observation Team at pds@cdacouncil.org for assistance with finding a PD Specialist.

Will there be a new PD Specialist endorsement for the Birth to Five setting?

Yes, there is a new Birth to Five endorsement process for PD Specialists.

Will PD Specialists be trained and endorsed before the August 1, 2025 launch of Birth to Five?

Yes, PD Specialists were notified of the option to become endorsed in the Birth to Five setting in June 2025 via the PDS Newsletter. Please visit the PDS Community page on the Council website to read the newsletter if you missed it.

How will the PD Specialist know which sub-age group they will observe the candidate working with? Will this information be shared during the pre-visit call?

PD Specialists will conduct the pre-visit call utilizing the Pre-Visit Checklist. During this call the PD Specialist will ask the candidate which sub-age group they will observe during the verification visit and input this information into YourCouncil.