



How to Compile Your CDA Professional Portfolio

Prepared by the Professional Development Team at Child Care Aware® of North Dakota

The CDA Professional Portfolio is a:

- Requirement for the national CDA Credentialing Process
- Collection of specific resource materials to help you in your work with children and families
- Method for the national CDA Council to evaluate your competence
- Way to showcase your own philosophy about your work with young children and their families
- An opportunity to reflect on your own knowledge, skills and practices

Your Professional Portfolio must have been completed within the six months prior to your application for CDA Credentialing. It must match the age group and setting for which you are applying. This guidebook is a summary of the requirements for the CDA Professional Portfolio. For the complete description of requirements, please refer to The Child Development Associate National Credentialing Program and CDA Competency Standards book you ordered from the national CDA Council (www.cdacouncil.org).

The CDA Professional Portfolio contains:

- My CDA Professional Portfolio cover sheet
- Summary of CDA Education cover sheet plus:
 - Documentation of your CDA training and education such as official training record or college transcript, certificates, or other verification that you have successfully completed a minimum of 120 hours of training with no fewer than 10 clock hours of training in each of the eight CDA subject areas.
- Family Questionnaires Summary sheet plus:
 - Completed Family Questionnaires, a form you distribute and collect back from the majority of the families of children in your care (a return from more than 50% of families is required).
- Six Reflective Statements of Competence
 - Written statements of your own teaching practices, including one for each of the six CDA Competency Standards (300–500 words in length).
- Resource Collection
 - A specific collection of early childhood resources
- Professional Philosophy Statement
 - A written summary of your professional beliefs and values about early childhood education, how young children learn, and your role as an early childhood educator (no more than two pages in length).

Keep your completed Professional Portfolio in a safe place until your Verification Visit. At the Verification Visit, your PD Specialist will review your Portfolio to make sure it is complete. Please note that you are required to bring your Portfolio to the Verification Visit. Do not send your Portfolio to the National CDA Council.

Organizing Your Professional Portfolio

While there are no specific “rules” about how your Professional Portfolio should appear, it does need to be well organized and easy to use. The contents should be clearly labeled so that anyone looking at the Portfolio can quickly find each piece of information. It should also look professional – in other words, everything must be clean, nicely printed and legible. There should not be extra “clutter” to distract from the required information. The most common ways to organize your Professional Portfolio are to use either a binder or a file box. Select the option that is easy for you to carry, store, and manage.

Materials

To organize your Professional Portfolio in a binder, you will need the following:

- A 4-5 inch 3-ring binder
- 9-10 tabbed dividers sections (buy the kind that are three-hole punched)
- 25-35 plastic sleeve-protectors to hold the various materials and resources
- A pack of stick-on tabs in different colors
- A pack of stick-on white mailing labels

To organize your Professional Portfolio in a file box, you will need the following:

- A medium sized file box, either heavy cardboard or plastic
- 9-10 hanging file folders
- 9-10 file folder tabs, in different colors
- 25-35 plastic sleeve-protectors to hold the various materials and resources
- A pack of stick-on white mailing labels

Put It Together

Organize your Professional Portfolio following the My CDA Professional Portfolio checklist. In each Competency Standard section, start with the Reflective Competency Statement followed by the resources required for that standard. Use a different color for each section to make them easy to see. The colors used in this section are just examples – feel free to use your own creativity.

Each item in your Professional Portfolio should be labeled and numbered. In each section, use the same color tabs on all items included in that section. Many people like to put each resource in a separate plastic sleeve and then label it using a white mailing label. This is a good way to be sure your information is clear and easy for the CDA Professional Development Specialist to find during your Verification Visit.

You can also add some decorative items, such as an attractive cover or personalized section dividers using children’s artwork or photos. Some people incorporate scrapbooking papers and décor but be careful not to over-do decorative elements. Keep the overall look of your Portfolio clean and professional.

Don’t include a lot of extra material. Add a separate “Supplemental Resources” section to the back of your Professional Portfolio if you have many items that you really want to keep or showcase, but that are not required by the National CDA Council. You could also start a separate binder or file for this extra material.

Here is a list of the items that must be in your Professional Portfolio, in the order they should be placed. NOTE: All cover sheets are found in the back of the “National Credentialing Program and CDA Competency Standards” booklet.

- **Cover Page:** Your CDA Professional Portfolio cover sheet
- **Tab 1: CDA Education**
 - My CDA Education cover sheet
 - All relevant training transcripts, certificates, and other official documentation such as college transcripts
- **Tab 2: Family Questionnaires**
 - Family Questionnaire cover sheet
 - All completed and returned Family Questionnaires
- **Tab 3: Reflective Competency Statement 1**
 - Resource Collection Items RC I-1, RC I-2, and RC I-3
- **Tab 4: Reflective Competency Statement 2**
 - Resource Collection Items RC II-1 through RC II-9
- **Tab 5: Reflective Competency Statement 3**
 - Resource Collection Items RC III
- **Tab 6: Reflective Competency Statement 4**
 - Resource Collection Items RC IV-1 through RC IV-4
- **Tab 7: Reflective Competency Statement 5**
 - Resource Collection Items RC V
- **Tab 8: Reflective Competency Statement 6**
 - Resource Collection Items RC VI-1, RC VI-2, and RC VI-3
- **Tab 9: Professional Philosophy Statement**

Guidelines for Writing CDA Reflective Competency Statements

Your Reflective Competency Statements are a key part of your Professional Portfolio and you want to take the time to write them well. You will write six statements, one for each Competency Standard. Your statements are intended to reflect your own teaching practices in each of the CDA Competency Standards areas. It's helpful to divide each statement into the Functional Areas included in the Competency Standard and to write a brief paragraph for each of those Functional Areas. You'll find a list of each Competency Standard and the Functional Areas below.

Your paragraphs should include information about “why” the Functional Area is important and 2-3 examples of “what” you do every day (your teaching practices) to provide that Functional Area for children. Many of the statements require that you focus on a specific resource you've collected for your Portfolio.

Here is an example of how you might write a paragraph for each Functional Area that describes the “why” and “what” of your work with children. Notice that these two paragraphs total only about 100 words yet clearly demonstrate knowledge of early childhood needs and good practices. Because you are limited in the number of words you can use for each statement, select your words carefully to be as descriptive as possible and to showcase your knowledge and skills.

“WHY” the Functional Area is important: *Example: “I know that maintaining a healthy environment in child care is important because young children in child care settings are more likely to be exposed to germs and their immune systems are not yet fully developed.”*

“WHAT” you do everyday to meet the Functional Area in your practice: *Example: “To make sure my environment is healthy for children, I practice safe hand washing by using liquid soap and paper towels, and make sure to wash my hands after changing diapers, before handling food, and after cleaning or coming in from outside. I teach the children to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds to get most germs off their hands. I have a daily schedule of sanitizing surfaces and toys to prevent the spread of germs.”*

Each of your Reflective Competency Statements should be:

- Labeled with the Competency Standard number and description as well as the Functional Area(s) covered in the statement. Also, put your name in the upper right-hand corner of each page.
- Clear and concise
- Written on a separate sheet of paper
- Spell-checked, written in full sentences, and grammatically correct
- Typed in 11-12 point font using Arial or Times New Roman
- Approximately 500 words long

Here is a template for writing your Reflective Competency Statements, using Competency Standard 1 as an example. You will follow this same structure for each of the six statements you will write:

Your name

Competency Standard 1:

To establish and maintain a safe, healthy learning environment

Functional Area 1 – Safe:

I know attention to safety is essential in child care because _____

To make sure my environment is safe for the children in my care, I do the following things:

Functional Area 2 – Healthy:

I know that maintaining a healthy environment in child care is important because: _____

To make sure my environment is healthy for the children in my care, I do the following things: _____

Functional Area 3 – Learning:

I know how important it is to provide a child care environment that promotes learning because _____

To make sure my environment supports and promotes children’s learning, I do the following things:

Resource Reflection:

CS1a – The sample menu in my Resource Collection shows my commitment to children’s nutritional needs by _____

NOTE: If you did not design the menu in your Resource Collection, then explain the menu’s strengths in supporting children’s nutritional needs as well as what you would change and why.

CS1b – The room where my Verification Visit Observation will occur reflects the way I believe young children learn best in the following ways: _____

NOTE: If you did not design the room, then explain what you see as the room’s strengths in supporting young children’s learning as well as what you would change and why.

CS1c – The weekly plan in my Resource Collection reflects my philosophy on what young children need on a weekly basis in the following ways: _____

NOTE: If you did not design the weekly plan, then explain what you see as the plan’s strengths in meeting children’s weekly needs as well as what you would change and why.

CDA Competency Standards and Functional Areas

- **Competency Standard 1:** To establish and maintain a safe, healthy learning environment
Contains Functional Areas:
 - Safe
 - Healthy
 - Learning Environments
- **Competency Standard 2:** To advance physical and intellectual competency
Contains Functional Areas:
 - Physical
 - Cognitive
 - Communication
 - Creativity
- **Competency Standard 3:** To support social and emotional development and to provide positive guidance
Contains Functional Areas:
 - Self
 - Social
 - Guidance
- **Competency Standard 4:** To establish positive and productive relationships with families
Contains Functional Area:
 - Families
- **Competency Standard 5:** To ensure a well-run, purposeful program that is responsive to participant needs
Contains Functional Area:
 - Program Management
- **Competency Standard 6:** To maintain a commitment to professionalism
Contains Functional Area:
 - Professionalism

Self/Peer Review of Reflective Competency Statement

Use this checklist to review your competency statements. It's a good idea to ask someone else to read and review your statements to give you objective feedback.

Which Reflective Competency Statement was reviewed? _____ Statement 1 _____ Statement 2 _____ Statement 3 _____ Statement 4 _____ Statement 5 _____ Statement 6	Who wrote it?		
	Who reviewed it?		
	Date of review:		
Did the statement contain:	Yes	No	Comments:
A label with the correct Competency Standard number and description?			
All the Functional Areas included for this standard?			
The author's name?			
A clear reason for WHY each Functional Area is important?			
2-3 specific examples of the practices the candidate uses with children to meet each Functional Area?			
Examples appropriate for the age group of children the candidate works with?			
Examples demonstrating good practice and an understanding of quality early childhood programming?			
Formatting:	Yes	No	Comments:
Is the paper neat and typed?			
Is the paper typed in either 11 or 12 point font using Arial or Times New Roman?			
Are all the words spelled correctly?			
Are complete sentences used?			
Is the entire Competency Statement between 500-600 words in length?			
Do you have suggestions for the candidate to consider adding or changing?			

Guidelines for Writing Your Professional Philosophy Statement

The final piece of your CDA Professional Portfolio is your Professional Philosophy Statement. A Professional Philosophy Statement is a one to two-page document that describes in clear language your approach to teaching, the methods you use, and your expertise. A philosophy statement is not a resume. Instead it's a description of:

- Your concept of teaching and learning
- A description of how you teach and/or provide care to young children
- Justification for why you teach or provide care in the way you do

Writing a Professional Philosophy Statement takes time and a lot of self reflection. While there's no right or wrong way to write a philosophy statement, your Philosophy Statement should align with your Reflective Competency Statements. The ideas and approaches to teaching that you describe should be similar in both sets of documents.

You may decide to write in paragraph form, create visuals, or use a question/answer format. However, here are some general "rules" to follow:

- **Follow the same good rules of writing that you used with your Reflective Statements of Competency:**
 - Labeled with a heading and your name
 - Clear and concise
 - Written on a separate sheet of paper
 - Spell-checked, written in full sentences, and grammatically correct
 - Typed in 11-12 point font using Arial or Times New Roman
 - No longer than 2 pages
- **Include teaching strategies and methods to help people "see" you in the classroom.**
Include very specific examples of your teaching and caregiving strategies to help people visualize what you do every day with children and to give them a picture of the learning environment you've created.
- **Make it memorable and unique.**
What sets you apart? What do you want the CDA Council to remember about you? How are you going to show the Council that you are intentional about supporting children's development and learning, and that you are committed to your career?
- **"Own" your philosophy.**
Avoid the use of declarative statements such as "The only way that children learn is..." You don't want to appear that you are a know-it-all or that you are closed to new ideas. Instead, write about your experiences and your beliefs. When you "own" those statements, you appear more open to new and different ideas about teaching.

Here is a template to help you get started writing your Professional Philosophy Statement. Use these statements to help formulate your thoughts about your professional philosophy.

Professional Philosophy Statement of Jane Candidate

The early childhood period of development is special because _____

I believe that the goal of early childhood care and education is to _____

I think the most valuable aspects of early care and education are _____

To me, a perfect early childhood environment is a place where _____

I have chosen to work with young children and their families because _____

I believe that the most important thing I can do as a teacher/caregiver is _____

The main theme of my approach to working with young children and their families is _____

I see my role in supporting children's development and learning as _____

I believe that young children develop and learn best by _____

My objectives for the growth and development of the children in my care are _____

The developmental and learning outcomes I want children to achieve in my care include _____

My curriculum, daily schedule, environment, and materials support my objectives for children's development and learning by _____

The teaching methods and strategies I use include _____

I believe that my approach to teaching helps to create my vision of a "perfect" early childhood environment by _____

To measure my own effectiveness in helping children achieve developmental and learning outcomes, I

I continue to grow my skills and knowledge in working with young children by _____

Beyond teaching and learning, I believe I have an important role to play in the lives of children and families by _____

I will consider myself a successful early childhood teacher/caregiver when children _____

And when families _____

And when I _____

What do I do with my Completed Resource File?

Your Resource File is one of the things that will be checked by the CDA Professional Development (PD) Specialist when you have your Verification Visit. Do not send your Professional Resource File to the national CDA Council. The PD Specialist will go through it to be sure it is complete and will award a score based on the level of skill and knowledge your materials and written work demonstrate. That score will be sent to the national CDA Council and will be factored in to the decision to award you a CDA Credential. Following your Verification Visit, the PD Specialist will return your Portfolio to you for your own future reference.

Where can I get more help?

The ultimate authority for information about the CDA Credentialing Process is the National CDA Council. The Council provides you with two excellent sources of information:

1. The National CDA Council website at www.cdacouncil.org includes a live chat feature that will give you an immediate response to your questions. The live chat is available during normal business hours in the eastern United States time zone.
2. *The Child Development Associate National Credentialing Program and CDA Competency Standards* book you ordered from the National CDA Council (www.cdacouncil.org) includes everything you need to know and/or have to complete the National CDA Credentialing Process. Keep the book handy and refer to it throughout your CDA training and preparation.