



# Child Development Associate FAQs



The Child Development Associate (CDA) is one of the most popular pathways to obtaining the [Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate](#) (ECAC), the required credential for lead teachers in early childhood care and education centers in Louisiana. It's also the premier credential for Early Childhood Educators around the country! It is often the credential that leads to a successful early childhood career.

## Benefits of completing a CDA include:

- qualifying for the ECAC,
- furthering your professional development journey,
- becoming a nationally recognized professional in early care and education,
- taking your career to the next level; and, becoming eligible for a tax credit (please see below).

NOLA C.A.R.E.S. is a collaboration seeking to build wealth for Black and Latine/x/a women through Early Childhood Education. Through a generous grant from JP Morgan Chase, NOLA C.A.R.E.S. is offering a pathway to the CDA through our partners For Providers by Providers through Elite Teacher Institute, and Total COmmunity Action (TCA) through Delgado Community College at no cost to you! If you live and/or work in Orleans Parish and identify as Black and/or a member of the Latine/x/a community, you are eligible. All programs are BESE approved.

## Here's what you need to know:

### 1. How long will the CDA course take?

Program coursework is 6 months, most participants can get coursework and certification completed in 6 to 8 months. Participants that may need more support in completing the required coursework may tend more toward the 8 months mark. Elite Academy has an in-house Professional Development specialist, which helps the process to go more smoothly.

### 2. What do you need to apply?

- High school diploma or similar certification like a GED. If you have obtained your High School diploma outside of the U.S. you will be required to go through an approval process prior to certification.
- Must be at least 18 years old unless you are a high school pathways student
- Must be working in an ECE center or be willing to be placed in a center to complete your hours. You will be required to complete and pass a criminal background check.
- **People with higher learning degrees (Associates, Bachelor, etc.) in the child development or education field are not considered for free tuition.** This includes candidates with 36 or more CDA clock hours or 12 college credit hours in early care and education.

### 3. What do you need to complete the CDA?

- 120 hours of coursework including writing competency statements, resources, lesson plans, and calendars
- 480 hours of in-classroom work experience. This includes 12 hours of individual coaching, two formal CLASS observations, and 30 hours of a variety of hands-on learning activities.
- All materials are provided.

### 4. What supports are offered?

- All coursework and services can be accessed in English and Spanish
- Coaching office hours
- Applied practice and hands-on learning
- Loaner laptops
- Books, binders, and learning materials
- Flexible and responsive coaches
- Coursework designed for working professionals: self-paced, hybrid learning environment
- Supports with writing and literacy
- Group sessions

## 5. What do you need to apply for certification?

1. Complete the coursework, including preparing your CDA professional portfolio.
2. Receive a CDA Verification Visit from a CDA Professional Development Specialist.
3. Take the CDA exam.
4. Ancillary Application must be submitted by your center director along with your transcript.
5. After receiving your CDA, complete the free ancillary certificate application through Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE). The LDOE currently requires a Social Security Number to complete the application for certification. Note that applicants must work at a licensed ECE center, and the center's director or director designee must complete the application, including your work verification.

## 6. How can I receive the tax credit?

- There is a tax benefit! Qualifying teachers can receive a refundable tax credit of at least \$1,800. To qualify, you must work at least 30 hours per week in the same Type III center for at least 6 months during the calendar year.
- To qualify for [tax credit](#), you will need to receive your CDA, and apply for and receive your ECAC from the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) by December of the year that you are filing. Plan to have all paperwork in by September of the year you are applying for.
- [Louisiana Pathways](#) must review your ECAC credential information and assign your level, which will indicate how much your tax credit will be. They will issue a hard copy, sent to your last known address by the end of January. It is **very important** to make sure Pathways has your **current address**.



If you are interested in joining thousands of early childhood professionals around the country in taking your career to the next level, please see our [program page](#).



Learn More:  
[wearenolacares.org](http://wearenolacares.org)

