The six CDA Competency Standards, outlined by the Council for Professional Recognition, are the framework of the CDA Credential professional development process. These standards are the criteria used by the Council to assess the CDA Candidate’s performance to determine the credentialing decision.

The six CDA Competency Standards are expanded upon in further detail within the thirteen Functional Areas. The thirteen Functional Areas describe the major responsibilities and objectives early care professionals must complete and understand in order to carry out the CDA Competency Standards. Although the six CDA Competencies are the same for all settings (center-based, family child care, home visitor), the thirteen Functional Area definitions and sample behaviors differ for each setting and age group. To be well aware of the thirteen functional definitions and sample behaviors for the setting they work in, CDA Candidates can review the setting-specific CDA Competency Standards books: Infant-Toddler Center-Based, Preschool Center-Based, Family Child Care, or Home Visitor. CDA Candidates can access the CDA Competency Standards books from the Council for Professional Recognition’s website.

CDA Competency Standards and Functional Areas

CDA Competency Standard I
To establish and maintain a safe, healthy learning environment

Functional Areas:
1. Safe
2. Healthy
3. Learning Environment

CDA Competency Standard II
To advance physical and intellectual competence

Functional Areas:
4. Physical
5. Cognitive
6. Communicative
7. Creative

CDA Competency Standard III
To support social and emotional development and to provide positive guidance

Functional Areas:
8. Self
9. Social
10. Guidance

CDA Competency Standard IV
To establish positive and productive relationships with families

Functional Area:
11. Families

CDA Competency Standard V
To ensure a well-run, purposeful program responsive to participant needs

Functional Area:
12. Program Management

CDA Competency Standard VI
To maintain a commitment to professionalism

Functional Area:
13. Professionalism