



## Policy Agenda

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.