



FAMILY CHILD CARE: Choosing the Right Credential-Degree Option

An **Explore-FCC*** Practical Help Bulletin

What is included in this bulletin?

If you are exploring becoming a Family Child Care Learning Home (FCCLH), before you apply for a license, you must understand and make decisions about the licensing Credential-Degree requirement. This bulletin provides in depth information about two commonly chosen options, the Child Development Associate (CDA) and the Technical Certificate of Credit (TCC).

This bulletin Explains:

- What is the licensing requirement for a Credential-Degree?**
- Why are the CDA and TCC options practical choices for an FCCLH applicant?**
- What are the specifics of obtaining a CDA?**
- Are there sources of funds to help me pay for a CDA?**
- What are the specifics of obtaining a TCC?**
- Are there sources of funds to help me pay for a TCC?**
- What is DECAL Scholars and how can it help me?**

What is the licensing requirement for a Credential-Degree?

This bulletin is a companion to another **Explore-FCC** bulletin, [FAMILY CHILD CARE Credential-Degree Requirements: Basic Information](#) which is on the PFCCAG website (See: <https://www.pfccag.org/explore-fcc>). The [Basic Information](#) bulletin explains an applicant must possess a valid Credential-Degree to be licensed as a FCCLH home, but an applicant can request a Variance “submitted with the licensure application to enroll in a program to obtain one of the credentials within six months of licensure and complete within two years”.

There are seven Credential-Degree options listed (see Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) [Rules and Regulations](#) document at 290-2-3-.07 Staffing and Supervision (2)). This bulletin addresses the two most commonly used options chosen by applicants, the Child Development Associate (CDA) and the Technical Certificate of Credit (TCC).

Why are the CDA and TCC options practical choices for an FCCLH applicant?

These two options are practical because of time, cost, and content reasons. It takes less time to achieve a CDA or TCC than the other “higher degrees” listed by DECAL and compared to the cost of the other higher degrees, the cost is less. The CDA must be renewed every three years while a TCC is a permanent degree. In addition, both CDA and TCC address basic early childhood education care and development concepts and skills. They are a good foundation, or refresher, for all applicants including those who previously cared for children in a nanny, family, friend or neighbor, or relative care setting.

What are the specifics of obtaining a CDA?

The CDA is a national credential offered by the Council for Professional Recognition. According to the Council’s website (<https://www.cdacouncil.org/en/>), “The CDA® national credentialing program is a professional development opportunity for early educators working in a variety of settings with children ages birth to 5 years old and their families to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and abilities in the early childhood education field. The program is designed to assess and credential early childhood education professionals using multiple sources of evidence, including an exam, observation, and a professional portfolio.”

The Council offers CDAs related to child care in centers, home visiting, and one related to Family Child Care described as “for educators working with children age birth to 5 years in a family child care home”.

Commented [PS1]: Also offering an Infant Toddler CDA as well as a Preschool CDA

Note: The center based CDA is organized as either an Infant Toddler CDA or a Preschool CDA. If you obtain one of these CDAs, you meet the DECAL requirement.

To obtain the CDA Family Child Care Credential, you must:

Any time prior to applying:

- Earn a high school diploma, GED or be enrolled as a junior or senior in a high school career and technical program in early childhood education.
- Complete 120 hours of formal early childhood education training, covering the growth and development of children ages birth to 5 years, with no fewer than 10 training hours in each of the eight CDA® subject areas.

The CDA Subject Areas are:

- Planning a safe and healthy learning environment
- Advancing children’s physical and intellectual development
- Supporting children’s social and emotional development
- Building productive relationships with families
- Managing an effective program operation
- Maintaining a commitment to professionalism
- Observing and recording children’s behavior
- Understanding the principles of child development and learning

Within 3 years of submitting your application:

- Obtain 480 hours of professional work experience in a mixed age setting group child care setting with children ages birth to 5 years.

Within 6 months of submitting your application:

- Prepare your CDA professional portfolio. This is a collection of reference materials related to your work with children and families. You will find detailed preparation instructions in the blue Family Child Care edition of the CDA® Competency Standards book.
- Select a CDA Professional Development (PD) Specialist™ to conduct your CDA Verification Visit®, which is part of your final assessment. Your PD Specialist will review your professional portfolio, observe you working with the children, complete a reflective dialogue with you, and submit score recommendations to the Council.

Are there sources of funds to help me pay for a CDA?

The cost to apply with the Council for a CDA is \$425. There are several options for obtaining the 120 training hours including online starting from \$399.00 up. CDA training is offered by individual trainers and through the Technical College System. If you live in the United Way of Greater Atlanta 13 county area, you may be eligible for support to complete some of the training through the Early Learning Career Success Project at <https://www.elcareerpathway.org/>. See also the DECAL Scholars section below; there is a scholarship to pay for the application fee.

What are the specifics of obtaining a TCC?

The Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) offers an Early Childhood Care and Education Basics TCC degree program. There are 22 colleges and 88 campuses in the TCSG. All 22 colleges offer the Early Childhood Care and Education Basics TCC degree.

The TCC, involves the completion of at least three courses (nine credit hours) and typically requires two semesters to complete. Although offerings may vary, most colleges offer courses each semester (Spring, Summer, Fall). For applicants in the Atlanta area, Georgia Piedmont has a specific Family Child Care TCC.

Are there sources of funds to help me pay for a TCC?

Contact the technical college where you are enrolling. You may be eligible for a Hope or Zell Miller scholarship or other source of financial aid. See also the DECAL Scholars section below.

What is DECAL Scholars and how can it help me?

DECAL Scholars supports ECE professionals, including Family Child Care Learning Homes, all over Georgia in gaining more education and skills and earning a financial reward. Increasing your level of education plus staying longer at your job means higher quality care for the children you work with. DECAL Scholars is a statewide program that supports your effort by rewarding eligible Georgia ECE professionals with tuition assistance and salary bonuses!

SCHOLARSHIPS is a statewide educational assistance program for pursuing credentials or degrees in early childhood education or child development. Funds are available to support the achievement of the CDA Credential by paying the Council for Professional Recognition's \$425 CDA application fee (\$400 is sent directly to the Council and \$25 is reimbursed when the CDA is earned) and providing a \$100 support stipend to approved applicants. There are eligibility requirements including you must be a FCCLH in operation for at least three months. In addition to the CDA scholarships, there is also an Academic Family Child Care Learning Home SCHOLARSHIPS program that offers a larger stipend to help with additional costs with pursuing a college credential/degree.

Once a provider has earned their CDA/TCC credential, they are eligible to receive a single payment **AWARDS**. The credential must be conferred within 12 months of applying for AWARDS. You must have been employed in your current eligible position with the same employer for at least six (6) consecutive months at the time you submit your application. The award is \$1200 for attaining a CDA Credential issued by the Council for Professional Recognition, or a Technical Certificate of Credit (TCC). If they earned their Infant Toddler CDA or TCC credential then the Award is \$1300. Additional Awards are available for attaining higher levels of education.

A provider with a CDA or TCC will receive an **INCENTIVES** payment of \$250 with a maximum of receiving two payments. Incentives applications must be dated and postmarked between February 15 and April 15 for the spring payment OR between August 15 and October 15 for the fall payment. The requirements to receive INCENTIVES are: You must have earned an ECE credential or degree in the past 5 years and must have been employed with your current employer for at least 12 consecutive months in an eligible position or be a licensed Family Child Care Learning Home for 12 consecutive months. Additional INCENTIVES are available as you attain additional academic credentials and degrees.

In addition, to receive either INCENTIVES or AWARDS you must meet the following work setting requirements:

- A program that has earned a Quality Rated designation
OR
- Accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA), the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) or other approved national accreditation. (See below for a full list).
OR

- Is a Georgia Pre-K program in a public school.
OR
- A participant in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
OR
- Serving children of whom 25% or more receive a child care subsidy from the Child and Parent Services (CAPS) program.

For more information go to the DECAL Scholars website at: <https://www.decalscholars.com/>. DECAL Scholars also offers free educational counseling for professionals in Early Care and Education by contacting support@decalscholars.com or phoning 770-642-6722.

***More About Us-We Are Here to Help**

The **Explore-FCC** project is available to provide coaching and other support to individuals in Greater Atlanta seeking to open a Family Child Care Learning Home (FCCLH). **Explore-FCC** serves the 13 counties greater Atlanta area with priority on zip codes with low or very low scores on Child Well-being measures established by United Way of Greater Atlanta. **Explore-FCC** helps individuals who are in the early stage of exploring family child care as a career, as well as those applying for a license to open an FCCLH home. The **Explore-FCC** project is operated by the Professional Family Child Care Alliance of Georgia (PFCCAG) and funded by United Way of Greater Atlanta and Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation. For more information and, to see if you qualify for one-on-one coaching, visit the "Start Your Business" section of the PFCCAG Website: <https://www.pfccag.org/start>.

We're here to be of service as you travel this journey of opening a Family Child Care Learning Home.