Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Children's Garden

Provider No.: 26358

Address: 3223 University Ave, Des Moines, IA, 50311

County: Polk

Director's Name: Shae Harper

On-Site Supervisor: Latoya Spencer, Lashay Washington, Aliza Thomas

Phone Number: 5152599880

E-Mail: director@childrens-garden.org

HHS Visit Date: 04/10/2026

Licensing Period: 05/01/2026 to 05/01/2028

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 04/07/2026

Comments: Des Moines Fire Marshal. For licensing, these inspections are due at least every three years. Des Moines does annual inspections.

Report Visit Type:

- [ ] PTO
- [X] Licensing Visit
- [ ] Drop In
- [ ] Administrative Change

License Type:

- [X] Full
- [ ] Provisional

Quality initiative:

Quality Rating: 2

- [ ] Accrediation

Program Duration:

- [X] Year-Round
- [ ] School Year
- [ ] Summer Only

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HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*
Sunday			
Monday	7:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Tuesday	7:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Wednesday	7:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Thursday	7:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Friday	7:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Saturday			

Program Population Served:

- [X] Infant(0-<24 Months)
- [X] Toddler
- [X] PreSchool
- [X] School Age
- [ ] All Ages

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Aged	Capacity
General	24	12	27	37	100
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

A licensing inspection was conducted on 4/10/26. The director was present throughout the inspection as was the office manager.

All areas of the program were observed. These areas observed consisted of classroom observations and activities, ratios, nutritional practices, health and safety practices, playground observation, field trip and transportation practices, and administrative review.

Children's Garden is located on the lower level of Trinity Lutheran Church in Des Moines. The center moved to this location from Wesley Acres on 11/24/14. Children's Garden serves children typically ages six weeks old to 12 years old. The center uses the Lillio Learning Curriculum with children. There are nine classrooms total. At the time of the inspection, there were 64 children enrolled.

The center is overseen by a Board. The director as of 8/2025 is Shae Harper. Shae has past experience working in child care and has taken a number of professional development training. Latoya Spencer, Lashay Washington, and Aliza Thomas are the on-site supervisors of this center. All three individuals meet the qualifications for on-site supervisors.

During the inspection, children were observed being held while being bottle fed, engaged in tummy time/free choice play, finishing up lunch, and napping on cots. Toys and other equipment in classrooms are cleaned, sanitized, and disinfected daily. Children questioned stated they washed their hands before sitting down for lunch. Children also discussed other times they wash their hand while at the center. Children questioned also gave specific answers as to where they relocate to for monthly fire and tornado drills.

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NUTRITION: The center serves breakfast, lunch, and a PM snack to children. The food menu met CACFP guidelines, however, milk for children two and older has to be skim or one percent milk. Children eat in their classrooms at the child-size tables and chairs. The center employs a full-time cook and has a full kitchen.

TRANSPORTATION/FIELD TRIPS: The center owns two vans that they use for transportation for field trips and for picking children up after school. Field trips are mostly taken during the summer months. For all transportation needs, a first-aid kit and children's emergency contacts are taken along. Regular maintenance is performed on the vans.

PLAYGROUND: The center uses a fenced in playground area as well as an open grassy area for older children. Monthly playground inspections are being conducted.

For difficult child behaviors, management stresses communication between staff and parents, team bonding, and working together. The director encourages her staff to ask for assistance if/when needed.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

Enrollment remains steady.

The center has an upstairs gym they can use when weather does not permit outdoor play.

The center participates in a program called Fit and Fun.

The center participates in the food program (CACFP).

There is a secure entrance into the center. Security cameras are in classrooms.

Staff use walkie talkies to communicate with one another when in different areas of the center.

All children were the same style/color of shirt when they go on field trips off site.

The center uses their nurse consultant and CCR&R on a regular basis.

The center has their own website where additional information about the center can be obtained.

Monthly staff meetings are held.

The center has a full-time cook.

The center uses the Brightwheel (as of 4/13/26) electronic application for daily sheets.

The center participates in IQ4K which is a voluntary program based on best practice.

The new director has a lot of experience working in child care. The director stated she also has a support system in place with other area directors as well as the center Board.

The director stated she feels her staff work well with each other and communicate well with each other.

The director believes they have good relationships with the families they serve. An emphasis is placed on communication with parents.

Staff photos are posted and there is also a staff recognition board for good work.

There are janitorial staff who do extra cleaning in the center.

A staff lounge has been created within the past year for staff members to take their breaks and complete training hours.

The center also has an office manager.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

109.9(1)a: All files contain: Copy of a department criminal history record check form or any other permission form approved by Department of Public Safety for conducting an Iowa or national criminal history record check. Copy of a request for child abuse information form, when applicable. Copies of results of Iowa record checks conducted through the SING for review by the department upon request. Copies of national criminal history check results. Any department issued documents sent to the center related to a record check, regardless of findings.
One staff member needs to be fingerprinted again.

109.10(13)a: The center shall have written emergency plans and diagrams for responding to fire, tornado, flood, and plans responding to intoxicated parents and lost or abducted children. Emergency plans shall include written procedures including plans for: Evacuation to safely leave the facility. Relocation to a common, safe location after evacuation. Shelter in place to take immediate shelter when the current location is unsafe to leave due to the emergency issue. Lock down to protect children and providers from an external situation. Communication and reunification with parents or other adults responsible for the children, which includes emergency telephone numbers. Continuity of operations. To address the individual children, including those with functional or access needs.
The Emergency Preparedness Kit and plan could not be located on the day of the inspection.

109.10(13)b: Emergency instructions, phone numbers, and diagrams for fire, tornado, and flood shall be visibly posted and documented at least once a month for fire and tornado. Records shall be maintained for current and previous year.
November 2025 fire and tornado drills were missed as were December 2025 fire drill.

109.11(8)b: Centers at ground level that use basement area as program space, or have a basement beneath program space: Testing and plan for remedy of radon is conducted.
Radon testing, per the director, was conducted in March 2025, but results were not present at the time of the inspection.

109.13(1 and 2): Center shall serve each child a full, nutritionally balanced meal as defined by CACFP guidelines. Staff shall provide supervision at table during snacks and meals. Children at center two hours or longer shall be offered food of not less than two hours and no more than three hours apart unless child is asleep. Menus shall be made available to parents and kept on file with substitutions noted. Avoid foods with high incident rate of causing choking.
Milk for children two and older needs to be one percent or skim milk.

4. Any corrective action plans, provisional license, and safety plans-steps to get into compliance

The below standards should be corrected as soon as possible and maintained.

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

The center will be moving into a wing of the Franklin Elementary School tentatively in July 2026 once they have an approved Fire Marshal inspection and this consultant has an opportunity to see the space.

Radon tested was completed 3/18/21 - 3/21/21 so it is now past due again. It was previously noted that: All classroom came back with radon levels below the 4.0 cutoff. Because levels were below 4.0, the center can move to testing for radon at least every five years now. So long as radon levels remain below 4.0, they can remain on a five year plan. If at the next testing, levels in any classroom come back 4.0 or higher, the center will have to have a mitigation plan, retest, and at least temporarily move back to testing every two years.

The annual boiler inspection expires in 12/2026.

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I-Power was discussed during the visit. It appears staff are uploading training hours into their profiles.

The list of supplies that could go into the Emergency Preparedness Kit were emailed to the center after the inspection concluded.

Annual updates for children's files should still be taking place. It is also recommended that staff files be organized per the staff tracking sheet. The staff tracking sheet was emailed to the center after the inspection concluded.

A new, full, two-year license is recommended.

Date: 04/13/2026

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HHS Licensing Consultant: Nate Knepper

Non-compliance with any of the mandated regulatory requirements listed above may lead to the cancellation or revocation of your Child Care License. Please take steps necessary to completely address each of the violations noted above.

Child Care Resource and Referral is an excellent resource for providers to access training options and support in your area. You can reach Child Care Resource and Referral at **https://iowaccrr.org**.