Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Growing Tree Early Learning Center

Provider No.: 52027

Address: 10000 Meredith DR, Urbandale, IA, 50322

County: Polk

Director's Name: Jodi Defenbaugh

On-Site Supervisor: Ashley Defenbaugh

Phone Number: 5153093390

E-Mail: Enrollment@growingtreeelc.com
jodi@growingtreeelc.com

HHS Visit Date: 03/12/2026

Licensing Period: 02/01/2025 to 02/01/2027

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 03/18/2024

Comments:

Report Visit Type:

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

License Type:

- [X] Full
- [ ] Provisional

Quality initiative:

- [ ] Accrediation

Program Duration:

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

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HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*
Sunday			
Monday	6:30 AM to 5:30 PM		
Tuesday	6:30 AM to 5:30 PM		
Wednesday	6:30 AM to 5:30 PM		
Thursday	6:30 AM to 5:30 PM		
Friday	6:30 AM to 5:30 PM		
Saturday			

Program Population Served:

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

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Aged	Capacity
General	20	12	33		65
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

Growing Tree Early Education Center opened at this location on 10/31/22. Cindy Kniss and Jodi Defenbaugh are the owners. Cindy Kniss is the owner of two other centers in Iowa and will be the director of this center at this time. Cindy has a Bachelor's degree in Education and has been the owner/director of Formative Years Childcare Center in Ames, Iowa since 2017. Ashley Defenbaugh is the on-site supervisor as of December of 2022. Ashley has three prior years of experience in a childcare setting prior to taking this role and meets qualifications for this position.

An unannounced visit was completed on today's date. Mandatory postings are posted at the center's entrance. Classrooms are well furnished with age appropriate furnishings, supplies and toys. Children's coats and belongings are kept in cubbies.

Cindy and Jodi assisted with today's visit. The center currently has three infant classrooms. The young infant classroom had eight infants present. Two staff were working in this classroom. The next infant classroom, which serves infants from eight months to twelve to fourteen months had eight infants in attendance. There were two staff working in this class. The third infant classroom serves infants from twelve to fourteen months up to eighteen to twenty three months of age. There were twelve children in this classroom. Three staff were working with this group. The 2's class had ten children in attendance. Two staff were working in this class. In the preschool classroom, there were fifteen children. This group has mainly three and four year old children. There are a few children that are five years old. Two staff work in this classroom. Children were observed outdoors and in their classrooms today. Children were observed during lunch time. Some transitional times were observed, group activities and child directed, individual play times were observed.

The center serves morning snack, lunch and afternoon snack. The center has a full kitchen. Menus were reviewed and show compliance with CACFP requirements. Today's lunch was macaroni and cheese, peas, pineapple and milk.

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The center has two playground areas: one for toddlers and one for preschool age children. There is rubber tile and rubber mulch for surfacing material. There is shading in place. The center has completed monthly playground checks.

The center doesn't provide transportation.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

The center is family owned and operated. Management is friendly and organized. The center receives strong support from the owners.
The center uses Brightwheel for daily notes and communication with families. Every classroom has a tablet.
The center has a security system in place. There are cameras in all classrooms, the playground and the parking lots areas.
The center uses Creative Curriculum which is a strong, well rounded and balanced curriculum.
The center sends newsletters monthly and has a Facebook page and website.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

There were no licensing violations cited today.

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

N/A

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

The center has a full license.

This worker talked to management about recommendations for the young infant classroom. There were several restrictive containers on the floor in the classroom, including swings, bouncy seats, excersaucers. This worker suggested several containers be removed from the classroom as this classroom has a capacity of eight. There are several reasons the use of these devices should be not used or they be used very limited in daycare settings. Infants learn best when they can move around freely, interact with their environment, and explore. Restrictive containers limit these opportunities, which are crucial for healthy development.

Date: 03/16/2026

HHS Licensing Consultant: Melinda Larson, Child Care Licensing Consultant

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**.