Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Hand in Hand, Wrap Echo Hill

Provider No.: 53254

Address: 400 Echo Hill Rd, Marion, IA, 52302

County: Linn

Director's Name: Katie Simmons

On-Site Supervisor: Camisha Stamps, Alyssa Frost

Phone Number: 3193733363

E-Mail: hih@handinhandinc.com

HHS Visit Date: 09/15/2026

Licensing Period: 09/01/2026 to 09/01/2028

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 02/24/2026

Comments: Additional documentation dated 7/24/2026 from the fire marshal stating the school's fire marshal certificate can be used for this childcare.

Report Visit Type:

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

License Type:

- [X] Full
- [ ] Provisional

Quality initiative:

- [ ] Accrediation

Program Duration:

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

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CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*
Sunday			
Monday		6:30 AM to 6:00 PM	
Tuesday		6:30 AM to 6:00 PM	
Wednesday		6:30 AM to 6:00 PM	
Thursday		6:30 AM to 6:00 PM	
Friday		6:30 AM to 6:00 PM	
Saturday			

Program Population Served:

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

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Aged	Capacity
General			24		24
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

The Hand in Hand Inc Early Learning Centers original and founding owner is Kathy Kolthoff. Ms. Kolthoff is a local entrepreneur who began by opening a home childcare in 1998. Then in 2021 due to family and community need, Ms. Kolthoff's home childcare relocated and expanded into licensed childcare. Over the last 28 years, Hand in Hand Inc Family Learning Centers has broadened locations including some in partnership with local school districts. Specifically, Hand in Hand, Wrap Echo Hill is located inside Echo Hill Elementary School which is part of the Linn Mar Community School District. Hand in Hand, Wrap Echo Hill is a new program which received permission to open on 8/31/2026. Hand in Hand, Wrap Echo Hill is a profit program which operates school-year only Monday through Friday 6:30am to 6:00pm. Hand in Hand, Wrap Echo Hill serves preschool-age children. Total enrolled and attending children were reported to be 22 on 9/15/2026.

The Hand in Hand Inc Early Learning Centers multi-site owner and executive director is Kathy Kolthoff. Ms. Kolthoff holds a degree in Early Childhood Education and Business Management. Ms. Kolthoff has achieved the National Administrators Credential (NAC) and is a member of National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) as well as the Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children (IAEYC). The Hand in Hand Inc Early Learning Centers regional director is Sara Swestka. Ms. Swestka holds a BA Degree in Elementary Education and Early Childhood Education. Ms. Swestka has experience working with children, continues to participate in professional development and has achieved NAC. Multi-site director of this specific location is Katie Simmons. Ms. Simmons is also the Hand in Hand Inc Early Learning Centers multi-site curriculum specialist. Ms. Simmons has been with Hand in Hand's management team since 2011, has an AA degree in early childhood education, has experience working with children and participates in professional development. Site specific supervisor is Camisha Stamps. Ms. Stamps has experience working with children and participates in professional development.

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

On 9/15/2026, program space was observed. Primary programming occurs in room A-110. Sufficient restrooms including hand washing sinks are available to accommodate total capacity. The program has some access to the outdoor designated preschool play area and school gymnasium. On days school is in session, all foods offered to the children are stored and prepared by the Linn Mar Community School District in the on-site school kitchen. On days school is not in session, the program provides snacks while each family supplies their child's cold lunch. Areas of study during the month of this license visit included "Friends" and "Apples". On 9/15/2026, activities observed included circle time discussion and center play experiences. Evidence of previous days' work was nicely displayed in an area noted as "Every Child is an Artist". Curriculum allowed for a variety of experiences that were observed to pique child interest as well as build cognitive skills, strengthen emotional intelligence, enhance physical coordination, and encourage the use of social graces. During the monitoring visit, routine transitions observed included clean-up procedures and restroom/drink breaks. On 9/15/2026, staff were observed to be in ratio, utilizing positive redirection when needed and engaging in programming with the children. Children appeared comfortable with staff and to be enjoying the day.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

The mission of Hand in Hand is to "...provide a safe, nurturing, and engaging environment where every child can build a strong foundation for lifelong learning. We support development through age-appropriate practices, individualized care and meaningful experiences that foster growth, confidence and a love for learning in every child we serve..." The specific school-age vision is to "...provide a safe, enriching environment where children can spend time before or after school...to present children with the life skills of teamwork, sportsmanship, creativity and leadership through exciting, challenging activities..."

Hand in Hand has the following website for families and the community to learn more about their programs: https://handinhandinc.com/.

This specific site commenced operations on 8/31/2026. In 2022, however, Hand in Hand received a "Certificate of Appreciation" from the Linn Mar Community School District to certify that Hand in Hand made a significant and important contribution to Linn Mar High School and is held in the highest esteem as a member of their school community. Ms. Simmons discussed many goals for this new program including future participation in quality initiatives.

As of 9/15/2026, Hand in Hand, Wrap Echo Hill has a seasoned management team (e.g. Ms. Kolthoff, Ms. Swestka, Ms. Simmons, Ms. Stamps). While having just commenced operations less than a month prior to this license visit, this location already has noteworthy systems of organization in place to help ensure administrative items are completed and maintained as required. Management is knowledgeable of licensing guidelines as well as their own policies and procedures. There continues to be local collaboration among all Hand in Hand programs for the sharing of materials, curriculum, ideas, planning, new staff orientation, new staff shadowing/training, behavior strategies and professional development training. The management team also continues to be mentors throughout the community as well as part of an online innovative national director social media group. Hand in Hand management team is additionally part of a local task force known as "Building Community Childcare Solutions" which examines childcare needs and solutions. Management acknowledged having a professional seasoned team of staff who work hard. Management has discussed how they continue to have regular communication with all staff about a variety of topics including behavior strategies, budgeting and maintenance. Hand in Hand locations to have an Employee of the Month, "Golden Goose Award", staff shout-outs, regular treats and monthly attendance recognition.

On 9/15/2026, Hand in Hand, Wrap Echo Hill was found to be maintaining required postings, maintaining a family program information center, offering regular newsletters, utilizing technological communication resources, and offering family programming activities. Curriculum is inclusive, incorporates teacher inspired ideas, and includes academic based learning strategies (e.g. individualized Handwriting Without Tears, intense kindergarten readiness, Everyday Mathematics, Letter People, A Little Spot of Emotion and Feeling, Waffles). Curriculum additionally incorporates themed days and various enrichments. Management discussed their continued commitment to investing in quality play items with a purpose for learning. Management acknowledged the positive family feedback they have already received in less than a month of operations.

Hand in Hand, Wrap Echo Hill has and updates as needed policies and procedures that include those for safety, daily health checks, hand washing, cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting. On 9/15/2026, management and staff discussed how they continue to help ensure the children's space is sanitary and hazard free each day by following the policies and

procedures. Management and staff also talked about having much continued support from the school district (e.g. school administration, school maintenance, school custodial team) as to daily building and grounds conditions and repairs. Although not operated by this licensed childcare, the on-site school kitchen is inspected by the local health department. There is an AED on-site.

All Hand in Hand childcare programs have emergency plans, policies, and procedures in place which are annually reviewed and updated as needed. Hand in Hand sites have successfully navigated through flooding events (2008 historic Linn County flood), 2019 winter Polar Vortex, 2019 health (covid-19) pandemic, 8/10/20 Derecho Storm, 2021 food supply issues, 2022 infant formula shortages, air quality alerts (2023, 2025), and repeated technology outages (7/19/24 global technology outage, 10/10/2025 AWS outage, 10/29/2025 Microsoft outage) and 2026 nationwide cyclosporiasis outbreak. Also noted that in 2023 to present day, Hand in Hand began monthly employee safety plan reviews focusing on a series of topics beyond those within licensing requirements including housekeeping, ergonomics, proper lifting, workplace violence, and slips, trips and falls.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

None noted

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

Not applicable.

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

As a new program, continue to increase outdoor materials, large gross motor supplies and classroom materials (e.g. equipment cart, active play kit, areas for outdoor seating, areas of shade, river stones, stacking stumps, parachute, easy stack cots, career costumes, Grandmas Dress Up, Beginners Hammering Kit, 4 Seasons Floor Puzzles, Preschool Puzzle Library). Please connect with CCR&R and apply for the "Growing Iowa" fund (https://www.iowaccrr.org/child-care-providers/iowa-child-care-funding-opportunities/) designed to support regulatory compliance and quality childcare in Iowa.

Targeted Assessment: Behavior Management
Licensing discussed with management oversight of behavior management related to helping childcare staff: 1) understand expectations, 2) manage frustrations, and 3) monitor performance. Management discussed how they are present in their programs, encourage staff to come to management with child behavior concerns, help model PBIS, encourage staff to participate in PBIS training, ensure staff have breaks, schedule extra staff whenever possible, establish child specific behavior plans when needed, consider changing classroom routines, utilize their curriculum (e.g. Little Spot of Emotion, Waffles, calming corners), complete written incident reports, send children and/or staff home when needed, and exercise their required polices for enrollment and disenrollment of children as needed. Licensing and management also talked about resources available through the Child Care Resource and Referral behavioral specialist position, our local Child Care Nurse Consultant, the local Tanager Place Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC) program and through our local AEA.

A full license is issued. Thank you for the visit.

Date: 10/15/2026

HHS Licensing Consultant: Amy Lyons

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

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**.