Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Spencer Family YMCA Dvergsten Center

Provider No.: 30277

Address: 1001 11th Ave West, Spencer, IA, 51301

County: Clay

Director's Name: Amy Kuehler

On-Site Supervisor: Erika Buum

Phone Number: 7122623789

E-Mail: akuehler@spencerymca.org

HHS Visit Date: 01/08/2026

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

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 10/31/2025

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	5:30 AM to 6:30 PM		
Tuesday	5:30 AM to 6:30 PM		
Wednesday	5:30 AM to 6:30 PM		
Thursday	5:30 AM to 6:30 PM		
Friday	5:30 AM to 6:30 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	30	21	61	100	212
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

I completed an unannounced a licensing visit at the Spencer Family YMCA Dvergsten Child Care Center on 01/08/26. During the visit, discussions were held with Director Amy Kuehler and Onsite Supervisor Erika Buum. Amy has extensive experience with the program, having served as the director of the school-age program for several years and as the director overseeing both childcare and school-age programs for the past five years. The center operates within the YMCA facility in Spencer, utilizing multiple classrooms and other YMCA amenities to support its programming. The facility offers a range of services, including traditional childcare, preschool programming, and the Kids Kamp program, which provides care and activities for school-age children before and after school as well as during the summer months. The center operates year-round, Monday through Friday, with hours from 5:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., and serves children from six weeks of age through 12 years old.

All components of the program subject to licensing standards were thoroughly reviewed during the visit.

The center has a secure entrance where staff controls access and admits all individuals into the building. The center utilizes several designated classrooms for infants, toddlers, and preschool children up to age five, ensuring these spaces are secure and not accessible to other YMCA patrons. Classrooms include a room for infants ages six weeks to six months, a room for children six months to one year, and separate classrooms for one-year-olds and two-year-olds. Additionally, the center provides a preschool/daycare classroom for three-year-olds and another for four-year-olds. Beyond these dedicated spaces, children also have access to other YMCA facilities, including gymnasiums, the pool, and a lounge area. These areas serve as primary programming spaces for the Kids Kampus program, which accommodates school-age children. Staff are able to close or section off areas of these shared spaces as needed to ensure safety and program integrity.

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There are 212 children enrolled in this center. At the time of my visit 78 children were present.

The center utilizes the Creative Curriculum as its primary educational framework and incorporates GOLD® assessments to monitor and support child development. These tools guide teachers in planning developmentally appropriate activities and tracking progress across multiple learning domains. The Creative Curriculum is a research-based approach that emphasizes hands-on, project-based learning and fosters growth in social-emotional, cognitive, physical, and language development. It encourages exploration and discovery through structured yet flexible activities. The GOLD® assessment system complements this by providing an observational method for evaluating each child's progress. Teachers collect evidence during daily routines and interactions, which helps inform individualized instruction and ensures that developmental milestones are met.

A daily schedule of activities was posted in the classroom. Throughout the room, displays included colors, shapes, numbers, the alphabet, a helpers list, a picture schedule for the children, and examples of children's artwork. Staff were observed actively engaging with children in a variety of ways, including assisting with activities, conversing with them throughout the visit, leading exercise, reminding children of classroom rules, and sitting with them during meals. The center provides well-arranged learning environments with designated areas for blocks, dramatic play, science, library, discovery, and puzzles, allowing children to explore and learn through hands-on experiences. Children have access to a bathroom, and the room arrangement supports smooth transitions and active engagement. There was a sufficient number of toys and equipment for the number of children present. Materials in the preschool classrooms were intentionally selected to align with the learning themes established in the curriculum, reinforcing the program's educational goals. Staff were highly involved with the children, promoting a positive and interactive learning environment.

The program contracts with Hy-Vee Catering to provide meals, while some preschool children bring lunches from home. All lunches brought from home are stored in the refrigerator to ensure proper temperature control. Meals provided by Hy-Vee are delivered to the center in insulated containers designed to keep food at safe hot or cold temperatures. The refrigerator is clean and maintained at the appropriate temperature. Although the center is not currently enrolled in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), it follows the program's nutritional guidelines to ensure healthy meals for children.

Medications are securely stored in a locked box or placed out of children's reach, and staff adhere to proper procedures for administering medication. Tables are sanitized before meals, and both staff and children were observed practicing excellent handwashing routines. A well-stocked first aid kit is available to treat minor injuries. Safety drills for fire and tornado emergencies are documented monthly, and a recent radon test showed results within the normal range. The annual heating inspection has been completed, and the center maintains good sanitary practices throughout. A functioning carbon monoxide detector is in place, and all program areas were observed to be clean, organized, and well maintained, creating a safe and welcoming environment for children.

The center's playground is a spacious outdoor area divided into two sections: one for older preschool and school-age children and another for toddlers. The main playground for older children features several climbing structures, swings, and a sandbox. Pea gravel is used as ground cover for cushioning, though some high-traffic areas have developed a hard, compacted layer. A large, covered shelter, mature trees, and the climbing structures provide ample shade throughout the play area. In addition to these features, the playground includes a large open grassy field where children can engage in active games that require more space.

Staff were observed actively engaging with children in meaningful and developmentally appropriate ways throughout the visit. They interacted at the children's level, fostering a warm and supportive environment. For example, when a child was having fun rolling on the floor, a staff member joined in the activity, creating a playful and inclusive atmosphere. Staff consistently encouraged participation, guided children through activities, and provided gentle reminders about classroom rules. They were attentive to individual needs, offering assistance when necessary while promoting independence. During meals, staff sat at the tables with the children, engaging in conversation and modeling positive social behaviors. Overall, staff demonstrated strong interaction skills that supported learning, social development, and a sense of belonging for every child.

Goals for this program are to continue to work toward IQ4K certification.

The center has successfully implemented scheduled staff training days during which the program is closed. This approach allows staff to focus fully on professional development without the demands of daily operations, supporting continuous

improvement and quality care.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

This center demonstrates many strengths, including having a full-time employee in every classroom and a team of highly experienced staff. Their commitment to maintaining consistent, qualified personnel ensures stability for the children and supports high-quality care and education.

The center demonstrates strong community involvement and actively participates in local events. One example of their engagement is a popular fundraiser where they sell Nutty Bars at the Spencer Fair, helping to build connections with families and community members while supporting program needs.

This program has access to the YMCA and therefor the children who attend may do extra activities such as swimming lessons.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

Dentist information not located in file.

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

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

It is recommended to continue to work with CCRR for support.

A full license will remain in effect at this time.

At least one visit will be made to the center during the next year.

Date: 01/13/2026

HHS Licensing Consultant: Leann Steinhauer

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**.