Iowa Department of Human Services
CHILD CARE CENTER EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE

Name of Center: Stepping Stones Early Learning Center Inc **Enrollment:** 155 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 23962

Street: 300 Panther DR **City:** Knoxville Iowa **Zip** 50138 **County:** Marion

Mailing Address: 300 Panther DR, Knoxville, IA, 50138

Director's Name: Keri Garrison **Phone Number:** 641-828-7837

On-Site Supervisor(s): Dana Wilkins **E-Mail:** kgarrison@knoxvillesteppingstones.com

Date(s) of Visit: 02-26-2025

Licensing Visit X **Unannounced Visit** X **Off Year Visit** **Administrative Change**

LICENSING VISITS

New Application X **Re-Application** **NA**

Signed Application (470-0722) Received X **Yes** **No** **NA** **Date Signed:** 10-01-2024

FIRE INSPECTION X **State** **Local** **NA** **Is Fire Inspection Approved?** X **Yes** **No** **NA**

Date Inspected: 08-12-2024

Comments : 8/18/24 -compliance date

LICENSE TYPE: X **Child Care** **Preschool (ages 3-5 meets three hours or less per day)**

Financial Type: Profit X Non-Profit NA

Accredition: Accredited NAEYC NSACA X Other NA

Program Serves: X Infants (0-23 mo.) X 2 Years X Preschool-Age X School-Age

Get-Well Evening Care Special Needs

SCHEDULE: X Year-round School-Year Summer Only

HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Age	Capacity
General	60	36	121	108	325
Summer					0

QRS Rating: 1

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 12-01-2024 to 12-01-2026
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Jill Seibert **Date:** 03-14-2025

I. IF CURRENT LICENSE IS PROVISIONAL, IDENTIFY THE CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

Stepping Stones Early Learning Center has been in operation since August 2006. The center provides child care services for infants through preschool age. The building has a secured entrance. The licenses for this center and Stepping Stones Kids Klub, which serves school age children, is under one license. The school age children have program areas in West Elementary School and this school building is located right beside the Stepping Stones Early Learning Center. The gym and a few classrooms are used for programming. Keri Garrison is the program director. She began in this role in August 2014. Previously, Keri was the On Site Supervisor and oversaw the school age program for nineteen years. Keri has a Bachelor's degree in Physical Education. The OSS/Business Manager is Dana Wilkins. Either the Director or OSS are present throughout the day.

An unannounced off year visit was completed on 2/26/25. All areas subject to HHS licensing rules were reviewed. Mandatory postings are in place at the entrance. Class schedules and lesson plans are posted by classroom entrances. Each classroom has age appropriate supplies and furnishings in place. Classrooms that serve children ages two and up have labeled interest centers within the classrooms.

Keri was present and she assisted during the visit. The center has ten classrooms in the main center. Nine classrooms were in operation today. Kids Klub was not in operation during today's visit. Children were observed during staff led activities and individual play activities. On previous visits classrooms were observed during lunch. Other visits children were observed sitting at tables doing staff directed activities, such as letter recognition activities and crafts. Circle group time was observed, where staff were reviewing letters and numbers. Staff were reading books to children as group activities. This year children were napping. Children not asleep were sitting quietly on cots reading.

On the visit all program areas were observed. The visit consisted of classroom and building area review and observations of activities, ratios, nutritional practices, health and safety practices, playground observation, field trip and transportation practices, and administrative review.

Center Nutrition Practices Observed:

Menu items should be specific and recorded daily. According to menus the program serves each child a full, nutritionally balanced meal as defined by CACFP guidelines. Staff provide supervision at table during snacks and meals. The kitchen was clean on the visit as was the pantry and refrigerator.

The center has a full kitchen and full time cook. The center participates in CACFP. The center serves breakfast, morning snack, lunch and afternoon snack. Menus are on a six week rotation. Children are fed every three hours or sooner.

Allergies are posted on cabinets when identified. Children requiring allergy action plans have these in the files and posted.

Lunch is prepared by program staff. The kitchen area is inaccessible to the children. It must be blocked off at all times so that children may not enter. Refrigerators are clean and contain thermometers. A thermometer should be easily found in all

cooling and freezing units so that temperatures can be monitored daily. Freezing temperatures should be zero degrees or below and cooling temperatures should be 40 degrees or below.

An approved sanitizer is utilized on tables before and after programming, and before snack or meal times, also anytime during the day when sanitation is needed (sick child, sneezing, coughing, play dough).

Center Health and Safety:

Administration of prescription and non-prescription medication is handled on a case by case basis in accordance with licensing regulations, physician directions, and parental consent. If medication is onsite it is stored inaccessible to the children and should have a physician/pharmacy label intact. Medication documentation should be in the child's file. All prescribed medication needs to have a pharmacy or physician label and medication sheet. If medication is over the counter it should be labeled with the child's first and last name. Emergency medication is stored in a safe place out of reach of children, A “fanny” hip pack or small cooler is best for outdoor play or field trips. The center has access to a Child Care Nurse Consultant that will assist with medication documentation, allergy plans, etc...

Labeled First Aid Kits are stored out of the reach of children. Each classroom has a designated ill/injured area. The center has the current First Aid Kit checklist. All items on the list should be procured. Incident and Injury reports have been filled out for the past year.

We reviewed environmental testing and the maintenance of any necessary detection equipment. The building was constructed after 1971 so a lead based paint visual assessment is not required. The plug in carbon monoxide detector is non-battery operated and UL approved unit. Updated radon testing is due every five years. Radon mitigation and testing will be an ongoing issue that should be closely monitored by Administration. Fuel burning appliances inspection is due annually. The program is on city water therefore water analysis is not required.

General safety regulations and compliance in the preschool are reviewed annually. If the program utilizes volunteers or substitutes criminal background checks need to be done on each volunteer and sub. Volunteers should always be under the direct observation of staff. All volunteers and substitutes shall sign a statement indicating whether or not they have one of the following:
a. (1) Conviction of any law in any state or any record of founded child abuse or dependent adult abuse in any state.
(2) A communicable disease or other health concern that could pose a threat to the health, safety, or well-being of the children.
b. (1) Complete form 595-136 DHS Criminal History Record Check, Form B
(2) Complete Form 470-0643, Request for Child Abuse Information.
(3) Sign a statement indicating the volunteer or substitute has been informed of the volunteer's or substitute's responsibilities as a mandatory reporter. Any visitors to the Center shall complete the tasks above.

Substitutes must have all required training that a full time employee has. A floater should be present at all times to ensure staff are able to take restroom breaks, etc... If staff have no one to relieve them then they are forced to leave the rooms out of ratio. All staff provided supervision during the visit. Staff are to have eyes on assigned children at all times. It is recommended to break the children up into smaller groups so that staff know how many children they are watching and their ages.

The center may have pets or plants if on the safe list. All classrooms and the main hallway of the center were clean the date of the visit.

Emergency plans and drills for fire and tornado were reviewed, I observed documentation of completed monthly drills.

Sanitation policies and procedures of the preschool were observed. Soapy water is used prior to the product if necessary to remove debris. All food waste containers were covered.

The center follows regulations regarding staff and child hand washing. Staff hand washing: The center shall ensure staff demonstrate clean personal hygiene. Staff shall wash hands:
(a) Upon arrival at the center.
(b) Immediately before eating or participating in food service activity.
(c) After diapering a child.
(d) Before leaving the rest room either with a child or by themselves.
(e) Before and after administering non emergency first aid if gloves are not worn.
(f) After handling animals or cleaning cages.

Children’s hand washing: Center shall ensure staff assist children in personal hygiene. For each infant or child with a disability, a separate cloth for washing and one for rinsing may be used in place of running water. Children’s hands shall be washed:

(a) Immediately before eating or participating in food service activity.
(b) After using the restroom

An infant under one year old was asleep with a blanket during the visit. This does not follow Safe Sleep requirements which state: The provider shall follow safe sleep practices recommended by AAP for infants under one year of age: Infants shall always be placed on their back for sleep. Infants shall be placed on a firm mattress with a tight fitted sheet that meets Consumer Product Safety Commission federal standards. Infants shall not be allowed to sleep on a bed, sofa, air mattress or other soft surface. No child will be allowed to sleep in any items not designed for sleeping but not limited to, an infant seat, car seat, swing, bouncy seat. No toys, soft objects, stuffed animals, pillows, bumper pads, blankets, or loose bedding shall be allowed in the sleeping area with the infant. No co-sleeping shall be allowed. Sleeping infants shall be actively observed by sight and sound. If an alternate sleeping position is needed, a signed physician or physician assistant authorization with statement of medical reason is required.

Center Playground:

An outdoor play area is located directly behind the childcare building. Monthly playground inspections are kept on file. A labeled First Aid kit is taken outdoors. Emergency contacts should also be available in case of an emergency. The Childcare Weather Watch is utilized when outdoor play is questionable due to weather conditions. Iowa Department of Public Health Child Care Nurse Consultant can conduct an injury prevention summary report and health and safety assessment upon request. All commercial play equipment/toys appeared to be sound and no safety hazards present.

The center has a fenced playground. Rubber tile is used for surfacing material. There are a few climbing structures. Kids Klub uses the school's playground also. The non commercial play equipment should be removed from the area. Mulch was added to the area this past year.

When children are in the outdoor play area staff must know which children are assigned to their care and know their whereabouts at all times. It is recommended that small groups be taken outdoors so that adequate supervision is achieved at all times. Often times groups of children are combined in this area, making it more difficult for staff to supervise their assigned group of children. Two year old children cannot be mixed with school age children.

Center Transportation Arrangements/Field Trips:

The program does not own a vehicle and provides no transportation. Walking field trips may be taken. A first aid kit will be taken on trips as well as the children's emergency contacts and emergency medications. Ratio for field trips should be followed.

Center Administrative Records:

Child misbehavior is addressed by redirection, having the child sit with the teacher for a short periods of time, or time out periods of age appropriate length.

Staff and child records are mostly complete and well organized and are reviewed annually. Child records are inspected including immunizations, physicals and updated emergency contacts and dental and medical information. New information is submitted yearly. Pick up authorization forms were present.

Staff files are reviewed including First Aid and CPR (2 years), mandatory reporting training (5 years) and professional development hours (due annually). Fingerprints for all employees as well as Iowa Criminal background checks should be present on all employees. CPR/1st Aid training is due every 2 years. Physicals and MR training are also reviewed. Physicals on all employees and MR training are due every 3 years. The center should work with CCR&R consultant to get up to date on any assistance they may need with training or filing. The center employs approximately 39 staff.

Compliance with mandatory postings in the center were reviewed. No Smoking signs are posted on entry doors. Mandatory reporter responsibilities, along with license consultant information, and the center license are posted.

Annual training on emergency plans should be conducted. The emergency preparedness plan was present. The center shall develop procedures for annual staff and volunteer training on emergency plans. The Director agreed to have staff sign and date acknowledgement of training on the center Emergency Preparedness Plan.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

Keri has been in a leadership with this center for many years. The classrooms are well furnished with age appropriate toys and learning materials. The center has security monitor cameras placed in the classrooms and playground areas.

The preschool program receives scholarship funds from the ECI Board (JUMP).

IV. IDENTIFY THE ASPECTS OF OPERATION THAT FALL BELOW THE STANDARDS REVIEWED:

1. 109.10(15)c: Center shall develop procedures for annual staff and volunteer training on emergency plans. The Director agreed to ensure all staff sign and date acknowledgement of the Emergency Preparedness Plan.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

The program may meet with CCR&R and IDPH to go over the licensing checklist at regular intervals. The program should meet with CCR&R and IDPH on a regular basis throughout the year, to ensure consistency and compliance. The center may access CCR&R (Brenda O'Holloran) and IDPH CCNC (Mandi Lauderman) to ask for assistance in maintaining licensing regulations throughout the year.

Based upon this review, it is recommended that this center remain in Full licensing status. The center is directed to continue to monitor day to day practice and adjust accordingly to continue to ensure licensing rule is met consistently. It is important to note, all HHS licensing standards and procedures must be maintained during the renewal period.

HHS encourages you to contact your local nurse consultant. Child Care Nurse Consultants work with child care and early education businesses. Businesses may call or send questions to a child care nurse consultant about health and safety policies, health programs, health of personnel, and specific child health or safety issues. Please visit the following website for more information. http://idph.iowa.gov/hcci/consultants. CNC Lauderman reported, "Iowa Department of Public Health Child Care Nurse Consultants can perform an Injury Prevention Checklist both outside and inside. I visited Stepping Stones on that same September 25, for the referral you had made on safe sleep and sent you my follow up report. I had tried to completed a med skills test for one of their staff. We had scheduled two times to complete the test, and both times the staff did not come to work. I reported this information to our training specialist at the state and she said it would now be up to the individual to reach out to me. I can send you the documentation from the safe sleep follow up again if you need me too."

HHS encourages you to contact your Child Care Resource and Referral consultant. They offer centers assistance with meeting the HHS regulations, QRS, infant/toddler concerns, room arrangement and environment, developmental concerns, Best Practice information, CDA assistance, or any questions or concerns you may have. Please visit the following website for more information: http://www.iowaccrr.org Brenda O'Holloran is the facility consultant. Consultant O'Holloran provided consultation in January twice in person in 2024. She offered a visit and services in the spring as well (April 5th). She has worked with the program on IQ4K. 4/4/24 and 11/18/24 Stepping Stones- emailed and phoned director around PITC JMP Incentive grants.

*Note: If you are the Child Care Center Director and you feel something is unclear or unjustly cited, please contact your DHS Licensing Consultant to discuss the issue. The child care director may also send a response which will be placed in the licensing file.

*Note: If you are a member of the general public, there may be additional information contained in the public file. You may contact the DHS Licensing Consultant to inquire.