Iowa Department of Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER COMPLAINT

Name of Center: Hancock County Learning Center **Enrollment:** 42 **License ID:** 51393

Street: 110 5th St NW **City:** Britt **IA** **Zip Code:** 50423 **County:** Hancock

Mailing Address: 110 5th ST NW

Mailing City: Britt **IA** **Zip Code:** 50423

Director's Name: Audra Muro **Center Phone Number:** 641-843-0166

On-Site Supervisors: **E-Mail Address:** hclcdirector@gmail.com

Date of Complaint: 07-09-2026 **Date of Visit:** 07-14-2026

[X] Scheduled **[ ]** Unannounced **[ ]** NA

[X] Non-Compliance with Regulations Found **[ ]** Compliance with Regulations Found

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE

[X] NO CHANGES to licensing status recommended

[ ] PROVISIONAL license from **to**

[ ] SUSPENSION of License

[ ] REVOCATION of License

Complaint Details:

Did this complaint result in a serious injury? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Did this complaint result in a death to a child? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Summary of Complaint:

A complaint was received that a 2 year old child eloped from the center and was found at a neighboring business.

Licensing Rules Relevant to the Complaint:

109.10(14)a The center and supervisor shall ensure that staff knows names and number of children assigned. Staff shall provide careful supervision.

Inspection Findings:

An announced visit was made to the Hancock County Learning Center on 07-14-26 where DHHS co-worker Michelle Heuer and I met with the center director Audra Muro. Audra was aware of the concern and had footage from the center video surveillance system prepared. Were were able to watch the video which showed the 3/4 year old preschool classroom where children from that room, and the 2 year old classroom had combined for the afternoon following nap time. The time stamp identified the date of 07-09-26 at approximately 2:16 PM showing two staff in the classroom with 13 children. One employee, (MR), could be seen in a restroom assisting a child with toileting/diapering and was in a position where she was unable to observe the classroom or any of the other children. The other employee, (AK), could be seen in the main classroom space with the other children and was picking up cots from nap time. AK was observed to leave the classroom with some cots and could be seen carrying them to the 2 year old classroom. When AK left the room the child identified in the complaint could be seen following her to the doorway of the 2 year old room but AK was unaware of this. The child was then observed to then turn away from the door and proceed down the hallway toward the main entry area. There are no cameras showing the center lobby but the child could be seen exiting the building from the main entry door at approximately 2:19 PM and running across the parking lot and the grassy area at the back and side of the neighboring business. It was about this same time that the staff could be seen to realize the child was missing and began looking for the child. At approximately 2:20 PM the employee MR could be seen exiting the building and meeting an individual from the neighboring business who was returning the child to the center.

Michelle and I did speak with the staff, (MR) and (AK) who had been in the classroom individually and both provided consistent and credible statements. MR identified that she was the teacher assigned to the 2 year old classroom, and AK identified that she was the teacher assigned to the 3/4 year old classroom. Both identified that the classrooms do routinely combine for the afternoon. MR stated that she does typically assist the children with toileting/diapering as her class is the one where the children that do need assistance. MR stated that she was not aware AK had left the classroom while MR was assisting a child with a diaper change. AK did acknowledge that she had not said anything to MR that she was leaving the room to return the cots to the other classroom and had thought that MR would be returning to the classroom during the time she picked up the cots and took them to the other room. Both stated that as soon as they noticed the child was missing they began looking for the child. MR stated that when she went to the school age room to ask if the child was there one of the school age children told her that the child had gone out the lobby door. MR stated that she then went to the lobby and parking lot where she met the individual that was returning the child.

During the visit there were questions about the center maintaining ratio with an example of there having been 29 children (combined 2yoa to school age) on the play with just 2 staff that morning. Audra was able to provide information for the time that each child of each age group signed in, and the time that each staff signed in. It was noted that between 5:30 AM and 8:15 AM there were 14 school age children, and 7 children 2/3/4 years of age with 2 staff which does comply with Licensing Standards Ratio requirements. At 8:15 additional staff and children arrived maintaining required ratios.

Based on the information obtained this complaint is SUBSTANTIATED for violation of Licensing Standard 109.10(14)a The center and supervisor shall ensure that staff knows names and number of children assigned. Staff shall provide careful supervision.
-- The center video surveillance system clearly shows the events where both staff providing care in the room were attending to other tasks where they were not able to maintain direct line of sight of the children. One staff was engaged in the direct care activity of assisting a child with toileting/diapering in one of the restrooms. The other staff was engaged in a work responsibility of picking up and storing cots leaving the room for a brief period to place them in another classroom. It was at that point that the child followed that teacher who was unaware of the child following her out of the classroom. The child was the observed to elope from the center walking to a neighboring business where an individual from that business returned the child to the center. While the time frame for the events was very limited with a total span of approximately 4 minutes it still provided the child with the opportunity to leave the center unobserved. The requirement to provide careful supervision is interpreted to mean that children are maintained within direct line of sight and sound at all times. All parties agree that there was no communication between the staff that AK was leaving the classroom to ensure that MR was in a position to provide supervision to the children. As a result not only was the child that was able to leave the building left unsupervised, but there was a brief period where all of the children in that classroom where left unsupervised.

Special Notes and Action Required:

CHILD CARE CENTER COMPLAINT

This complaint is SUBSTANTIATED for violation of the identified licensing standard and the following actions are required and/or recommended. The center did take immediate action with installing door alarms on the main entry door to the building, and to the programming space from the lobby. The center installed child safety latches to the classroom doors.

REQUIRED
1. The center director shall implement training reviewing with all staff the requirement for supervision is that children are to be within direct line of sight and sound of staff at all times. Staff shall ensure that when there are transitions of staff/children related to responsibility of care staff shall verify that responsibility has been acknowledged and staff are in a position to supervise the children. Documentation of acknowledgement of that training review by staff shall be maintained.

Consultant's Signature:

Ray Salsbury

Date:

07-14-2026