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

Name of Center: First Steps Early Learning Center **Enrollment:** 87 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 17740

Street: 210 2nd St NW **City:** Clarion Iowa **Zip** 50525 **County:** Wright

Mailing Address: PO Box 184, Clarion, IA, 50525

Director's Name: Alecia Frink **Phone Number:** 515-532-2778

On-Site Supervisor(s): Joleen Gonzales **E-Mail:** kidskorner@clargold.org

Date(s) of Visit: 01-24-2024

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

LICENSING VISITS

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

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

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

Date Inspected: 08-11-2022

Comments :

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 Other X 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	40	15	32	21	108
Summer					0

QRS Rating: N/A

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

Licensing Consultant: Raymond Salsbury **Date:** 02-01-2024

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

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

An announced visit was made to the First Steps Early Learning Center on 01-24-24 where I met with center director Alecia Frink. Alecia took over as the director in 2022 and is well qualified for the position with a BA in Family & Human Development, and prior experience in early childhood care and education. Joleen Gonzales is the on-site supervisor and is also well qualified for the position based on her experience and on-going training. The center provides programming for infants through school age children. There are currently 87 children enrolled in the program served by 18 teachers. All aspects of the program subject to licensing standards were reviewed during the visit.

The layout and design of the center remains the same as identified in the prior licensing reports. The center makes use of a shared facilities building but has secured access doors between the areas used by the daycare, and those used by other tenants. The center makes of use of classrooms that are determined by age with separate rooms for infants, toddlers, 2 year olds, 3 year olds, 4 year olds, and school age children. The infant area is further divided with a primary programing area, nursing room, changing room, and sleeping room. With the separate rooms for programming and sleeping the center will need to ensure that staff are present in each room when children are in the room. In addition the infant capacity is determined with no cribs being used in the primary programming area allowing for 35 sq.ft. per child. The other classrooms have a more open design with the classrooms for the 2, 3, and 4 year old children having a long open floor plan. The toddler and school rooms have an L shape design which does create some area where line of sight would be limited depending on staff positioning. This is more notable in the school age room and staff do need to ensure that they are aware of where the children are playing that they are responsible for and position themselves in a manner so that they can observe all children at all times. The infant, toddler, and 2 year old rooms have restroom facilities available directly from the room. The preschool and school age children make use of restrooms located off the main corridor outside of the classrooms. A large multi-spigot sink is located outside of the restrooms in the main corridor, and all classrooms with the exception of the school age room have additional sinks in the room. Each classroom has a secondary exit providing direct egress to the outside. All exits were clear of obstruction and opened easily and freely with the exception of the exterior exit of the infant room where snow had not been shoveled clear. The door was able to be opened and push the snow out of the way but it was reviewed that doors need to be checked daily and all obstructions need to be removed. Each room has windows that provide ample natural light and a view of the outdoors. The center does have a large open room that was initially intended as a dining room area for meal service, or possible large motor indoor play but which will now be used as storage and a staff break room. This space was not considered in the available capacity of the program but could be added for use in the future if needed.

Each classroom is divided into activity centers through the placement of furniture and play structures which were arranged so as not to create any blind areas. The types of centers available include library, large/small manipulatives, and art/crafts in all rooms, and increases to include dramatic play, experience tables, group learning, and math/science in older classrooms. The toys and materials that were present were in good repair and appropriate to the ages of the children present. Each classroom had a copy of the daily schedule and planned curriculum present.

Ratio was maintained in each classroom as required by age but supervision was noted to be an area of concern. During the visit children were observed to leave classrooms to use the restroom unattended and unsupervised at times. At other times a

teacher would stand in the doorway to be able to supervise the child in the hall as well as those in the classroom. In addition when in the infant room a child was observed to be sleeping in a crib in the sleeping room without staff present in the room though a staff member did go to that room shortly after my arrive and remained while the child was sleeping. It was reviewed that staff do need to maintain direct line of sight and sound with children at all times, and be present in all child occupied rooms. Excellent interactions were observed throughout the visit with all staff being engaged with the children attending to their needs and presenting the planned curriculum. Teachers in each classroom were engaged in activities that were either teacher lead such as the 2 year old room where the children were doing a craft activity that included cutting and drawing. In the 3 year old room the children were engaged in self directed play and one of the teachers moved to interact with a child that was alone in the dramatic play center and worked to create a scenario for the child to build on, encouraged other children to join, and helped foster strong social interactions and creative play.

Good health and safety policies and procedures are in place. I was able to observe diaper changes and good practices were followed with recommendations to help reduce the risk of disease transmission provided. Good cleaning practices were observed during the visit with chemical cleaners stored where they were not accessible to children, and staff waiting for children to be out of the immediate area when using chemical cleaners. Over the counter medications were labeled and stored where they were not accessible to children. Good hand washing practices were observed with both children and staff. A first kit is present in the center and does contain a good supply of materials necessary to address most common first aid needs. Chemical cleaners, purses, diaper bags, and other items that could pose a safety risk to children were stored where children would not have access. Safe Sleep practices were followed on the day of the visit.

The center does have a full kitchen and meals are prepared on-site. A menu is posted and substitutions were documented. The kitchen was clean. Good food storage and handling practices were observed on the day of my visit. Meals are served in the classrooms with the teachers sitting and eating with the children at the tables. The teachers did wear food service gloves, and used measured scoops when portioning meals. The meal served on the day of the visit did have a well balanced plate that met CACFP guidelines.

The center does have an on-site playground space which is fenced but not fully reviewed due to snow cover. All construction has been completed. The playground does have two areas with one for infants and toddlers, and one for older children. A gazebo style shade structure is present. A unitary foam system is used for fall surfacing.

All required notices were posted in an area that was readily visible and accessible to parents and visitors. Evacuation maps that include both written and diagram instructions for fire and tornado evacuation were posted by main entrances for classrooms but need to be posted at all exits from all programming spaces. A random sample of child files were selected for review and compared to the self-audit completed by the center which was found to be accurate The self-audit identified 1 child needed an updated physical. A random sample of staff files were selected for review and again the self audit was accurate. The self-audit identified 12 staff had an expired or missing physical, and 1 had not completed the training required within the first 90 days of employment. Inspection logs and certificates were current and available but the center does need to install a Carbon Monoxide Detector. It was reviewed that it can be placed in a classroom, hallway, or some other location.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

This program has completed the relocation and renovation to the current facility so that all aspects are available and functional.

The center has done an excellent job of building curriculum and working with the teachers on engagement. This active approach was very successful in creating an environment where there were no behavioral issues and those that did arise were easily addressed through simple redirection.

The program is currently working toward certification in the IQ4K program which seeks to implement best practice recommendations.

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

109.9(1)d: All files contain a pre-employment physical exam report completed within six months prior to hire and at least every three years. Physical exams shall be documented on form 470-5152, Child Care Provider Physical Examination Report.
Number not in compliance: 12

109.9(4): Daily written records are maintained for each child under two years of age and include time periods slept, amount of/time food consumed, time/irregularities of elimination patterns, general disposition, and general summary of activities.

109.10(15)b: Emergency instructions, phone numbers, and diagrams for fire, tornado, and flood shall be visibly posted and documented at least once a month for fire and tornado. Records shall be maintained for current and previous year.
-- Emergency postings for fire and tornado evacuation with both written and diagram instructions are required by all exits from all programming spaces.

109.10(16)a: The center and supervisor shall ensure that staff knows names and number of children assigned. Staff shall provide careful supervision.
-- Children must be supervised by direct line of sight and sound at all times. Any child occupied room must have staff present.

109.11(7)c: All centers: Annual inspection prior to heating season of all fuel-burning appliances to reduce risk of carbon monoxide poisoning and shall install one carbon monoxide detector on each floor that conforms to UL Standard 2034.
-- A carbon monoxide detector is needed.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

A full license is recommended at this time. Please provide a written response to the licensing consultant identifying a plan of action to correct and maintain those aspects cited as not meeting licensing standards and identifying an anticipated date of compliance. At least one visit will be made to the center during the next year.

*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.