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

Name of Center: Elma Early Childhood Center **Enrollment:** 45 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 19089

Street: 319 Oak ST **City:** Elma Iowa **Zip** 50628 **County:** Howard

Mailing Address: PO Box 63, Elma, IA, 50628

Director's Name: Samantha Burke **Phone Number:** 641-393-2028

On-Site Supervisor(s): Christine Scott **E-Mail:** elmaearlychildhood@gmail.com

Date(s) of Visit:

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

LICENSING VISITS

New Application **Re-Application** X **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: 07-24-2023

Comments : The new infant room was inspected on 08/30/23

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	17	10	15	19	61
Summer					0

QRS Rating: N/A

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 09-01-2024 to 09-01-2026
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Becky Frost **Date:** 04-09-2025

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

N/A

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

On 08/26/24 I made an unannounced licensing visit to Elma Early Childhood Center. I met with Amy Swagel, the director. Ms. Swagel started with the center as the director in January 2024. She has an AA in an unrelated filed. She had a registered childcare home for nine years and was a paraeducator at an elementary school for seven years. Christine Scott is in charge when Ms. Swagel is away from the center. Ms. Scott has been with the center since April 2024. The center employs twelve employees.

The Elma Early Childhood Center opened on 06/05/08 and began operation at its current location on 08/19/08. The program operates year-round Monday through Friday 5:00 am until 6:00 pm. It serves infants through school-age children. They also have a summer only program and allow drop-ins when staff ratios allow. The three-year-old preschool class will be on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8:30-11:00 am. Ms. Scott will be the preschool teacher. There are currently 45 children enrolled.

The program operates out of three rooms. An infant room (birth until they turn two) a larger room is used for children who are two years old and older and there is a three-year-old preschool room that will be used during the school year. You must request an Exception to Policy through Des Moines to allow for two and three-year-old children to be cared for in the same room as children four and older. The preschool room is used by the school-age children during the summer.

An inspection of each room was completed. Windows provide natural lighting for the room for the older children, but artificial lighting is used in the three-year-old preschool room. The room for the older children is decorated with the children's art projects and their birthdays. The preschool room is decorated with posters to assist the children with the learning process, such as the alphabet, colors and numbers.

The centers observed on the day of the licensing visit include library, Lego/blocks, table toys, games, puzzles, transportation, art, dramatic play, listening, science, sensory table and music. Centers were arranged in a manner that allowed easy movement between activities, but it also allowed for clear supervision by staff members. Materials were in good condition. The materials are located at child level, so they were easily accessible to the children.

There are several large toys stored on top of the shelves. I observed children playing with these items while they were on the top of the shelf and one of the items fell off. Thankfully there were no children near it. These items must be taken down and put on the floor prior to children playing with them.

Cribs are used in the infant room and cots are used to nap for the older children.

The Creative Curriculum and a variety of other resources are used to create lesson plans. Activities are planned around weekly themes. A lesson plan was available for review in the large room and infant room. Preschool had not started yet during my visit.

There was a phone with emergency numbers and the center's address and phone number are in between the preschool room and the room for the older children and in the infant room. Emergency fire and tornado procedures and evacuation diagrams were posted by most of the main program doors and outdoor exits. An evacuation diagram must be posted near every exit out of a program room. Post the diagram on both sides of the door between the preschool room and the room for the older children. A daily schedule was posted in each room.

The program participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The center provides the children with breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack. Lunch was previously prepared by the local nursing home (Colonial Manor) all year around delivered to the center. Colonial Manor is going through some businesses changes so the center is working toward obtaining another contract with them for lunch. In the meantime, Ms. Swagel is making lunch using the community center's kitchen which is in the same building as the childcare center. Ms. Swagel is making new menus each month. Parents do pay a fee for lunch. The staff members prepare the plates for the children. Breakfast and snacks are prepared by the center staff members. Menus were available. Children eat in the classrooms. Dishes are washed in each room using the three-step method.

The center provides one brand of formula or parents can bring their own if they want to use a different brand. Parents provide the baby food and cereal. The center provides snacks. Bottles are washed in the infant room using the three-step method.

There is a kitchenette in the room for the older children. Food items were stored according to the NHSPS guidelines. There is a refrigerator in the kitchenette area and a thermometer was present in the refrigerated portion. The freezer portion was being used also so you must add a thermometer to this area. There is a refrigerator in the infant room and thermometers were present.

The center uses bleach and water to sanitize the food tables and disinfect the changing tables. I observed diaper changes in both rooms. In the area for the older children, I reminded the staff member to leave the disinfectant on the table for the dwell time indicated on the product bottle for it to be effective.

The center has two bathrooms in the larger room with one toilet in each room and a sink outside of the bathrooms. There is a changing table in one of the bathrooms. You must post handwashing procedures near the sink. Diaper changing procedures were posted. There is a bathroom in the infant room with a toilet and sink and procedures were posted. There is a handwashing sink and food prep sink inside the infant room. Handwashing procedures were posted. There is a diaper changing table in the infant room and procedures were posted. There are two sinks inside the preschool room and procedures were posted. There is a diaper changing table in the preschool room. If you use the changing table, you must post diaper changing procedures. There are additional bathrooms outside of the preschool room if necessary.

I reviewed documentation of monthly fire and tornado drills. I reviewed documentation of monthly playground inspections. Due to the renovations to the center, the playground area is no longer present. There is a plan to rebuild the playground. The center is using two city park playground areas that are bordering the center. The areas are inspected before use.

A radon test was completed in December 2023 and is only good for two years. Results were within EPA guidelines. The annual fuel burning inspection was completed and no concerns were noted. A carbon monoxide detector was on site and is on the ledge between the preschool room and the room for the older children. Outlets were protected. The fire marshal inspection for the new infant room occurred on 07/24/23 with compliance on 08/30/23.

The program is using ProCare for their daily sheets and to communicate with all parents.

The parent information is located on a bulletin board inside the front entrance of the center. The mandatory reporter, childcare consultant and the handbook availability were posted. The license was conspicuously hung. A no-smoking sign was posted at the entrance.

Staff and children files were reviewed at the time of the licensing visit. I reviewed eight children files. They were in great condition. I reviewed three staff files. They were in great condition.

I reviewed policy and procedures, staff and parent handbooks. The necessary written emergency procedures and policies were present. Emergency Preparedness Plans have been completed. You need to identify an evacuation site out of town.

Staff members were actively engaged with the children in activities. They provided the children with good handwashing reminders and assisted them with washing their hands. They interacted with the children at their level and had conversations with the children abuse using their words and taking turns. Staff members are patient and attentive. They were observed to be nurturing to upset children. They offered the children choices. They appeared to have good teamwork. They had good knowledge of the children and their routines. The children appeared to enjoy their time in the center.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

Ms. Swagel has done a terrific job of stepping into the director role. She seems to have a good knowledge of the licensing standards and she is organized and wants to do things correctly.

Staff and children files were organized and easy to read. Ms. Swagel keeps a licensing notebook with all the pertinent information I need to review.

The center is a bus stop for the school age children to Riceville School and Howard-Winn School.

Ms. Swagel states she has some good staff members. She states Ms. Scott is great in the room for the older children and the infant room staff members work well together.

Ms. Swagel states the staff members appear to be receptive to changes she has made and they have been supportive of her.

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

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

A full license is issued. All DHS licensing standards and procedures must be maintained during the renewal period.

In February 2025 an administrative change is being made to name Brenda Wallace as the new director. She started on 02/10/25. Ms. Wallace has a BA in elementary education. She has been an elementary teacher, supervisor for Head Start program, and was a principal at a Catholic school where she oversaw the daycare also.

In April 2025 an administrative change is being made to name Samantha Burke as an interim director. Taylor Smith, a former director, will also be helping with administrative duties until a new director is found. Christine Scott is in charge at the center until a director is found.

*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.