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

Name of Center: Sunflower Child Development & Discovery Center **Enrollment:** 155 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 19264

Street: 902 Commerce Drive **City:** Decorah Iowa **Zip** 52101 **County:** Winneshiek

Mailing Address: 902 Commerce Drive, Decorah, IA, 52101

Director's Name: Holly Benda & Amy Winter **Phone Number:** 563-382-5717

On-Site Supervisor(s): Holly Benda & Amy Winter **E-Mail:** holly.benda@sunflowerchildcare.org

Date(s) of Visit: 05-19-2025

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

LICENSING VISITS

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

Signed Application (470-0722) Received X **Yes** **No** **NA** **Date Signed:** 06-06-2024

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

Date Inspected: 06-06-2024

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	51	24	80	60	215
Summer					0

QRS Rating: N/A

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 04-01-2025 to 06-01-2027
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Becky Frost **Date:** 06-25-2025

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

N/A

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

On 05/19/25 I made an unannounced licensing visit to Sunflower Child Development Center in Decorah. I met with Holly Benda, the Executive Director. Ms. Benda started with the program in June 2021 and became the director in May 2023. Ms. Benda is NAC certified and an IAAEYC member. Amy Winter is a co-director and she is the Director of Education and Programming. Ms. Winter has a BA in elementary education with an early childhood and reading endorsement. Daiton Johnson is the Director of Operations for the center. Ms. Johnson has been with the program since August 2018 and has worked in various rooms during her time at the center. The center employs 78 employees.

Sunflower Child Development Center was started in 1975 and operates out of a free-standing building. They started in a newly constructed childcare building on 06/10/24. The program operates Monday through Friday from 7:00 am until 5:30 pm. The center serves infants through school-aged children and is open year-around. There are currently 155 children enrolled. The center had an IQ4K level 1 that expired on 10/31/24. They waited until they started at the new building to start the IQ4K process again and plan to go for a level 3.

The center operates out of the following rooms: three Duckling rooms (birth until approximately 12 months old), two Chipmunk rooms (approximately 12 to 24 months), two Otter rooms (two-year-olds), two Owl rooms (three-year-olds), Fox room (four-year-old preschool) and two Wolves rooms (school-aged). An inspection of each room was completed.

Please be aware that once children turn two years old in the Chipmunk rooms they must be moved up to the Otter room. Children who are under the age of eighteen months old cannot be cared for in the same room as children who are two years old and older.

Windows provide natural lighting. The rooms are decorated with multiple pictures of the children and their families, the children's art projects, and posters to assist the children with the learning process, such as the alphabet, shapes, colors and numbers. The children's birthdays were posted. There is an area for circle time in the rooms.

The centers observed on the day of the licensing visit include library, Lego/blocks, table toys, games, puzzles, transportation, computers/Ipads, puppets, Play-Doh, art, dramatic play, listening, writing, math, science/discovery, woodworking, 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 are easily accessible to the children.

In addition to the centers in the classroom, the center has use of a gym in the center and the use of the Discovery Center. The Discovery Center also has specific hours open to the community. The childcare center and community do not use the Discovery Center at the same time. The Discovery Centr id divided into zones.

There is a toddler area that has a turf surface. There are two small hills made of turf, two Lego tables, riding toys with a path and a slide. There is a "splash zone" with several water activities. There is a climbing zone with an obstacle course made of mats and a slide. There is a large Lite Brite Board, a large Etch A Sketch and a large 3D Pin Art Toy. There is also

a large Lego table in this area. There is a large playhouse with stairs to a reading area. There are tables and benches for the children to rest.

The Sunflower Child Development Center partners with the Decorah School District to provide the voluntary four-year-old preschool program. The voluntary preschool program meets on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 8:00 am until 1:00 pm. Nicki TerBeest is the lead teacher for the voluntary preschool program.

The preschool program uses the Creative Curriculum to develop lesson plans and completes the GOLD assessments. Additional resources are also used to create lesson plans, such as Heggerty Phonemic Awareness, Alpharady by Dr. Jean and Alphatales. Activities are planned around studies. The preschool program participates in the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards (QPPS). The other rooms use Creative Curriculum and a variety of resources to develop lesson plans. The length of the study depends on the topic and the children's interest. Lesson plans were available for review in every room.

The program uses the ProCare app to communicate with parents. Daily sheets for the children under the age of two-years-old are completed in the ProCare app.

There was a phone with emergency numbers in each of the classrooms. Post the emergency numbers near the phone in the gym and the phone in the Discovery Center. Emergency fire and tornado procedures and evacuation diagrams were posted by the main program doors and outdoor exits throughout the center. A daily schedule was posted in each room.

I reviewed documentation of monthly fire and tornado drills. I reviewed documentation of monthly playground inspections. The radon test was completed in June 2025 and is good for five years. Results were within EPA guidelines. The building is newly constructed and the HVAC system is new. The fuel burning inspection was completed at the time of installation. A carbon monoxide detector is in the fire system in each room on the ceiling. The fire marshal inspection occurred on 06/06/24.

The program participates in the Farm to Early Childhood Education (F2ECE) program. They have a weekly curriculum for the program that incorporates new foods each month. It also incorporates a weekly fitness program as part of F2ECE.

The center participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). They serve breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack. Shelly Dolley is the cook. She started with the program in November 2022. She has completed the Serv Safe class and has her Certified Board for Dietary Managers (CBDM) certificate. She has worked in the food service industry for 38 years. She uses a four-week rotation of menus that rotate three times a year, so the menus are seasonal. The children eat in their classrooms. They are currently using family style.

The center provides one brand of formula, baby food and cereal to the infants. If parents want a different brand, they must provide it. Bottles are prepared in the room. The parents have the choice of taking the bottles home or leaving them at the center where they are put through the dishwasher. There is a dishwasher in each of the Duckling rooms.

There is a refrigerator present in each classroom. Thermometers were present in each refrigerator except for the Chipmunk 2 classroom. Please add a thermometer to this refrigerator.

The kitchen was observed to be clean and organized. The new building has a spacious and modern kitchen. Menus and allergies were posted. Menus and dietary restrictions are also posted in the rooms. There is a walk-in freezer and refrigerator that have both an external and internal thermometer. The dishes are put through an industrial dishwasher. There are three industrial sinks available to hand wash dishes using the three-step method if necessary. I observed the pantry. Food is kept off the floor. Food items were stored according to the NHSPS guidelines.

The center uses bleach and water to sanitize food tables and Purell Professional Surface Disinfectant to disinfect the changing tables.

I observed and discussed diaper changing procedures with staff members and procedures are followed. In the Otter 2 room they were not cleaning the changing table with soap and water prior to the disinfectant. This must always occur.

There are multiple bathrooms, sinks and changing tables throughout the center and handwashing and diaper changing procedures were posted.

Cribs are used to nap for infants and then children transition to cots.

The parent information is located on a bulletin board inside the entrance. 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.

The playground is divided into six fenced areas. There is an area for each age group.

The Duckling playground has turf and a grassy area. There is a small hill made of turf and an activity center. Trees provide shade.

The Chipmunk playground has turf and a grassy area. There is a small hill made of turf. There is a small piece of climbing equipment with a slide. There is a music center. Trees provide shade.

The Otter playground has turf and a grassy area. There is a bike path for riding toys and a tunnel. There is a piece of climbing equipment with a slide. There is a music center. Trees provide shade.

The Owl playground has turf and a grassy area. There is a piece of climbing equipment with slides and there are steppingstones. There is a music center and a balance beam. Trees provide shade.

The Fox playground has turf and a grassy area. There is a rope climbing structure, merry-go-round, a tunnel and a tire swing. Shade is mostly provided by the building.

The school-age playground was not finished at the time of my visit because the center is waiting on the rubber mulch for their fall surfacing.

Staff and children's files were reviewed at the time of the licensing visit. I reviewed 20 children's files. Files must contain emergency contact information for the doctor and dentist of each child. The doctor's and dentist's name, phone number and complete street address must be provided. Four files did not provide adequate dental emergency contact information and one file did not provide adequate doctor emergency contact information.

I reviewed eight 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.

The administrative staff and teachers in the classrooms have a terrific working relationship. This is evident by the what was observed during my visit. There is a mutual respect and everyone's first priority is the care of the children. Staff members were terrific with the children. They were all actively involved with the children. They interacted with the children at their level. They had fun and creative learning activities for the children. Staff members were nurturing and attentive. I observed staff members holding children on their laps, rocking them and giving hugs. In the infant room staff members work on tummy time and crawling. Staff members were joyful and enthusiastic. They were patient and used positive redirection when necessary. The children appeared to enjoy their time at the center.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

Ms. Benda states they have increased the training for staff members because of going for an IQ4K level of 3. They have a couple of staff members who have their CDA's and three additional staff members are in the process of getting it.

Ms. Benda states two staff members used the TEACH program. Two staff members currently use the WAGES program.

Ms. Benda states they have increased the number of staff members who completed PBIS training. ECERS training, ITERS training and Passport training.

Ms. Benda states the center is operating smoothly. She and Ms. Winter have a system and routine down and so do the staff members in the classrooms. She states her staff members are doing a great job.

Ms. Benda is an IAEYC member and she has completed the National Administrator Credential (NAC).

The childcare center has two or three Retired Senior Volunteers (RSV) who come to the center weekly.

The program is in a secure building and there are cameras in each of the rooms.

There is information about each teacher outside of the rooms.

The program has organized and easy to read staff and children's files.

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

Files must contain emergency contact information for the doctor and dentist of each child. The doctor's and dentist's name, phone number and complete street address must be provided. Four files did not provide adequate dental emergency contact information and one file did not provide adequate doctor emergency contact information.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

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

I would like to see Ms. Benda's focus on the childcare center. As the director she is responsible for making sure all licensing standards are being followed, records are maintained, scheduling staff members, dealing with families and other administrative duties. I would strongly recommend placing someone else in charge of the Discovery Center so that she can focus on the childcare center. Being a director can be stressful and I do not want to see her overwhelmed.

An administrative change is being made to change the licensing period end date to 05/01/27. The reason for the change is so I can make the visit at the same time as the Head Start classroom in the building.

*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.