Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Tri-County Head Start Learning and Community Ctr

Provider No.: 52237

Address: 840-844 W 4th St, Waterloo, IA, 50702

County: Black Hawk

Director's Name: Dr. Robert Welch

On-Site Supervisor: Yolanda May

Phone Number: 3192350383

E-Mail: rwelch@teamtricounty.org

HHS Visit Date: 07/21/2026

Licensing Period: 08/01/2025 to 08/01/2027

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 10/09/2025

Comments:

Report Visit Type:

- [ ] PTO
- [X] Licensing Visit
- [ ] Drop In
- [ ] Administrative Change

License Type:

- [X] Full
- [ ] Provisional

Quality initiative:

- [ ] Accrediation

Program Duration:

- [X] Year-Round
- [ ] School Year
- [ ] Summer Only

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HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*
Sunday			
Monday	6:30 AM to 5:30 PM		
Tuesday	6:30 AM to 5:30 PM		
Wednesday	6:30 AM to 5:30 PM		
Thursday	6:30 AM to 5:30 PM		
Friday	6:30 AM to 5:30 PM		
Saturday			

Program Population Served:

- [X] Infant(0-<24 Months)
- [X] Toddler
- [X] PreSchool
- [ ] School Age
- [ ] All Ages

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Aged	Capacity
General	36	17	57	0	110
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

On 07/21/26 I made an unannounced off year licensing visit to Tri-County Head Start Learning and Community Center in Waterloo. I met with Austin Maske, the program manager. He started with Head Start in April 2025. Yolanda May is the on-site supervisor. Ms. May has an AA in child development and has worked with Head Start for twelve years. She also previously had an in-home childcare business. The program employs 18 staff members that work in the rooms. The Head Start administrative staff are also housed in this building.

Priscila Vergara and Charles Daniel are the family workers. They meet with families in the home to provide support and assist with community resources. Angela Barth is the Head Start Educational Specialist. Dr. Robert Welch is the Executive Director of Tri-County Head Start Programs.

The Tri-County Head Start Learning and Community Center program was given permission to open on 08/28/23. They operate out of a free-standing building. The program is non-profit. It operates Monday through Friday from 6:30 am until 5:30 pm all year round and serves infants through preschool age children. Wraparound services are provided. There are currently 39 children enrolled. The program has a capacity of 110 children.

The program operates out of the following rooms: Curious Cubs (infants aged birth-12 months), Kind Koalas (toddlers ages 12-18 months), Joyful Jaguars (18-24 months), Proud Pandas (two-year-olds), one preschool room for children ages three through five-years-old. They are currently not using four rooms. They program also has a Great Room for gross motor play. An inspection of each room was completed. Windows provide natural lighting in the rooms. The rooms are decorated with the children’s art projects and various other posters.

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The centers observed on the day of the licensing visit include library, Lego/blocks, table toys, games, puzzles, transportation, art, dramatic play, writing, math, science/discovery, magnets, puppets, 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.

There is a bathroom with a toilet and a sink in every classroom except for the Cubs and Koalas. There are diaper changing tables available in every classroom. Handwashing and diaper changing procedures were posted in most areas. Post handwashing procedures in the bathroom of the Leading Leopards and diaper changing procedures must be posted in the bathroom of the Joyful Jaguars. There is a sink in every classroom and handwashing procedures were posted. The infant room also has a sink for food prep.

The center uses the Creative Curriculum to prepare lesson plans and they complete GOLD assessments. They also complete 45-day assessments, which include ASQ, ASQ-SE and Brigance assessments. Each teacher prepares their own lesson plans. The length of the study depends on the interest level of the children and number of activities associated with the study. In the infant room they set developmental goals for each child and plan activities to achieve these goals. Lesson plans were available for review in each room.

The center works with Central Rivers AEA. They will come to classrooms to work with children who have identified needs. Monthly newsletters are provided to the parents and the program participates in the Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports (PBIS) program in the classrooms. This focuses on the three components, “be safe, be responsible and be respectful”. There are several visual cues in the classrooms to help direct the children. I did observe positive redirection and PBIS Methods being used with the children. The program also uses Second Step which is a social-emotional learning program. Let it Begin with Kindermusik was also observed in classrooms.

Daily sheets are maintained on children under the age of two-years-old.

There was a phone with emergency numbers and the program’s address and phone number were posted in each of the classrooms. Staff members communicate with each other using two-way radios. 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.

There is a medication box in each classroom in case a child requires medication. Each classroom also has a complete first aid kit.

I reviewed documentation of monthly fire and tornado drills. I reviewed documentation of monthly playground inspections. The radon test was completed in July 2023 and is good for five years. Results were within EPA guidelines. The annual fuel burning inspection was completed and no concerns were noted. The program put in a new HVAC system over the summer of 2025. The carbon monoxide detectors are built into the fire alarm system in the ceiling. Outlets were protected. The fire marshal inspection occurred on 10/09/25.

Head Start participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The center provides breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack. Meals and snacks are prepared by Head Start staff on site. The primary cook recently quit and Collin Sawyer, the assistant cook, is currently the primary cook. A Head Start nutritionist, Tracey Sauke, makes the menus. Mr. Sawyer states the nutritionist makes a new menu each month. There are two industrial refrigerators, two industrial freezers and a milk cooler in the kitchen and thermometers were present. There are three sinks and an industrial dishwasher for all dishes. There are two handwashing sinks. Handwashing procedures were posted. Menus were posted and allergies were confidentially posted. Lunch is delivered to the rooms and the children eat in their rooms. Family style is used for the older children.

The kitchen was observed to be clean and organized. Food items were observed to be stored according to NHSPS guidelines.

The infant room does all their dishes in their classroom using the three step method. There is a refrigerator in each classroom and thermometers were present.

Head Start provides formula, baby food and cereal for the infants. If the infant requires a special formula, Head Start will

purchase the formula with a doctor's note. Bottles are washed and sanitized in the infant room.

Head Start provides diapers and wipes for the children. There is a lactation station in the infant room for nursing mothers.

The center uses bleach and water to sanitize the food tables and disinfect the diaper changing tables.

I observed or discussed diaper changes in the classrooms. Proper procedures are being followed.

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

The parent information is located on a hallway wall 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 program has a fenced-in play area in the parking lot area of the program. The playground is divided into two areas. Turf is used for fall surfacing in both areas. One area is for infants and toddlers. There is a small piece of climbing equipment with a slide and a small hill for the children to climb. There are also riding toys.

The second area is for the older children. There is a piece of climbing equipment with a slide, a climbing wall and playhouse. There is a music station. There is a concrete bike path for the children that has stops along the path for gas and a grocery store. There are rocking toys, tunnels, and wood stumps. There is a shade structure in each area.

The gross motor room is used when children cannot go outside. There is a small slide in the room that has fall surfacing placed under it. There are other activities, such as large magnets, blocks, games and sensory items on the wall.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

The Head Start staff members are extraordinarily patient and how much they care is evident in their interaction with the children. Staff members spoke with the children in a calm voice. When there was a disagreement in one room between children, a staff member explained to the children that it was okay to like different things. Staff members acknowledged the children's feelings. Positive redirection and PBIS strategies are used in the classrooms. In one classroom, when a child's behavior accelerated, she called for assistance and someone arrived quickly to assist. The staff member remained calm. Staff members modeled good manners and talked with the children about using nice words. Staff members were actively engaged with the children in fun and educational activities. They used play to educate the children on colors and counting. They encouraged the children to use their imaginations. Staff members were nurturing and attentive. They interacted with the children at their level. I observed children holding children on their laps and giving them hugs. Staff members were flexible with their schedule and offered the children choices. Staff members provided praise and included the children in problem solving. Staff members had good teamwork.

Mr. Maske states the staff members have good staff engagement, especially with a lower number of children in rooms.

Mr. Maske states staff members have good interactions with the children.

Mr. Maske states the overall quality of care they provide for children is a strength.

Staff members receive health benefits, dental, vision and three mental health visits. Their children also get to attend Head Start at no cost through CCA.

Mr. Maske states he has started a "mental health check in" with teachers. He checks in with them every day and checks on them throughout the day. He showed me the form he created to use. He looks at mood, stress level, energy level, and the primary theme (cause).

Mr. Maske states he started a Positive Recognition Phase (1:1 meeting). He tries to do it every day but gets it done at least multiple times each week. He then gives a "shout out" in a weekly announcement to all staff members.

There are pictures of staff members in the entrance.

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Several staff members have longevity with the program.

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

Head Start has developed a specific orientation for new staff members. It is a quality and on-going training course.

The Head Start educational specialist is a PBIS trainer so this helps in training PBIS methods to staff members.

There are family workers available to meet with families and assist them by providing information about community resources. There are also resources in the entrance of the program.

The program has a Facebook page for families.

Lead teachers make up to three home visits each year. There are times when parents meet at the center instead of the home at the parent's request. These count for the parent/teacher conferences and provide staff members with great insight into the child's life and living environment.

Head Start provides a monthly newsletter to parents.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

There are no citations.

4. Any corrective action plans, provisional license, and safety plans-steps to get into compliance

N/A

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

A full license is issued for the remainder of the licensing period. All HHS licensing standards and procedures must be maintained during the renewal period.

Targeted Assessment: Behavior Management:
I discussed with Mr. Maske his oversight of behavior management related to helping childcare staff: 1) Understand expectations, 2) managing frustrations, 3) monitor performance. Mr. Maske states they provide clear expectations for their teachers. They do not touch children. They figure out what works for specific children and work with that. They ask what the children want. They try to switch the focus because they cannot win a back and forth argument with a child. Mr. Maske states the teachers can request teacher assistance on the radio and either himself or a family worker will go to the classroom to help. They tell frustrated teachers to go for a walk and do what they need to relax and come back to the room a new person. Mr. Maske states they ask, "who is actually escalated, you or the child". He asks staff members why they are here; to help children who need it the most or to prove who is right.

He monitors staff members by doing observation in the classrooms. He can also use camera observation. If something is reported he will meet with a staff member and they will watch the incident on the computer. It is a good learning tool. Staff members can recognize if they were escalated or if it was the child's behavior. He states it helps with perspective.

Date: 07/28/2026

HHS Licensing Consultant: Becky Frost

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Non-compliance with any of the mandated regulatory requirements listed above may lead to the cancellation or revocation of your Child Care License. Please take steps necessary to completely address each of the violations noted above.

Child Care Resource and Referral is an excellent resource for providers to access training options and support in your area. You can reach Child Care Resource and Referral at **https://iowaccrr.org**.