Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Elma Early Childhood Center

Provider No.: 19089

Address: 319 Oak ST, Elma, IA, 50628

County: Howard

Director's Name: Samantha Burke

On-Site Supervisor: Christine Scott

Phone Number: 6413932028

E-Mail: elmaearlychildhood@gmail.com

HHS Visit Date: 08/13/2026

Licensing Period: 09/01/2026 to 09/01/2028

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 07/06/2026

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	5:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Tuesday	5:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Wednesday	5:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Thursday	5:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Friday	5:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Saturday			

Program Population Served:

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

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Aged	Capacity
General	17	10	15	19	61
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

On 08/13/26 I made an unannounced licensing visit to Elma Early Childhood Center. I met with Christine Scott, the on-site supervisor/assistant director. Ms. Scott has been with the center since April 2024. Samantha Burke is the director. She is a preschool teacher at Riceville School and has a BS in elementary education. She has several years of experience as a teacher and in childcare. The center employs eight 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 Early Learner's Club (three-year-old preschool) will be on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday from 8:30-11:00 am. Ms. Scott is the preschool teacher. There are currently 42 children enrolled.

The program operates out of three rooms. An infant room (birth until age two), a larger room is used for children who are two years old and three year olds during the summer, and there is a room for four through school age children during the summer and it is the Early Learner's Club room during the school year.

An inspection of each room was completed. Windows provide natural lighting in the infant room and the room for two and three year old children, but artificial lighting is used in the Early Learner's Club room. The rooms are decorated with the summer's theme, which is space and the children's art projects.

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 are easily accessible to the children.

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

The Creative Curriculum is used as a guide to create lesson plans but they also use a variety of other resources. During the summer, there is a center-wide theme, which is space. During the school year, activities are planned around weekly themes. A lesson plan was available for review in all rooms. Ms. Scott is preparing the lesson plans for each room. Preschool had not started yet during my visit.

There was a phone with emergency numbers and the center's address and phone number in between the Ealy Learner's Club room and the two and three year old room. There is also a phone with emergency numbers posted in the infant room. Emergency fire and tornado procedures and evacuation diagrams were posted by all the main program doors and outdoor exits in the center. A daily schedule was posted for each room.

The program does not participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) but follows the guidelines. The center provides the children with breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack. Lunch is prepared by Riceville Community School. Someone picks up the lunch from the school once each week and it is kept in the kitchen. Some items are fresh and other items are frozen. The school provides a lunch menu. 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 are prepared by Ms. Burke and they were available for review. She makes a new menu each month. Children eat in the classrooms. Dishes are washed in each room using the three-step method.

Parents provide formula, baby food and cereal for their children until they begin eating table food. Bottles are washed in the infant room using the three-step method.

There is a kitchenette in one of the rooms. Food items were stored according to the NHSPS guidelines. There is a refrigerator in each of the rooms and thermometers were present.

The center uses the Community Center's kitchen. The kitchen has one refrigerator and thermometers were present. Sue Miller is the "lunch duty" staff member. She works 9:00-11:30 am each day. Ms. Miller prepares lunch and snacks. The childcare opener prepares breakfast.

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

I observed a diaper change in the infant room. Gloves are considered soiled and must be removed prior to putting on the new diaper and dressing the child. Additionally, the child's hands were not washed following the diaper change. This must always occur.

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. Handwashing procedures were posted 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 are additional bathrooms in the community center if necessary.

I reviewed documentation of monthly fire and tornado drills. I reviewed documentation of monthly playground inspections.

The radon test was completed in December 2023 and is good for five 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 07/06/26.

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

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The parent information is located on a bulletin board inside the front entrance of the center. The mandatory reporter, child care consultant and the handbook availability were posted. The license was conspicuously hung. A no-smoking sign was posted at the entrance. You must update my contact poster with the updates HHS website information and my new email address. A poster has been provided.

The center has a fenced-in playground. The area has a dirt hill that has two slides built into it. There is a stationary fire truck for the children to climb on. There is a sandbox with a cover. There is a concrete path. There are a large tarp and a tree for shade.

The city park east of the center has a basketball court. The city is painting the court to create colorful and fun activities for children. There are three areas with climbing equipment and swings. This area needs fall surfacing terribly. It has minimal woodchips. This area should not be used until adequate woodchips are added. Ms. Scott states the city has informed her they plan to purchase woodchips.

The city park south of the center has woodchips and pea gravel for fall surfacing. There are several pieces of climbing equipment. There are a few areas where woodchips need to be added before the play equipment, such as the swings, the snail climbing apparatus and the teeter totter should be used. Again, additional woodchips are going to be purchased.

Staff and children's files were reviewed at the time of the licensing visit. I reviewed six children files. They were in great condition.

I reviewed two 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.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

This center has several staff members with longevity. There is good staff communication and I observed staff members stepping in to help where needed. Staff members had great interaction with the children. When they spoke to the children they got down on each child's level. They had good knowledge of the children's routines. They encouraged the children to use their imaginations and their positive attitudes were contagious. They were nurturing and attentive. They were patient and used positive redirection when necessary. They had the children help solve problems.

Ms. Scott states the staff members work together as a team. They help in other rooms when necessary. She states staff members will also help cover her room so that she can complete administrative tasks.

Ms. Scott states staff members learn to work in different positions within the center.

Ms. Scott states that communication has improved between staff member and with parents. Ms. Scott states they have learned to document behaviors without being judgmental.

The center uses ProCare to communicate.

Ms. Scott states the board has divided up the administrative duties among various people on the board to help her with administrative tasks.

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

This center has had problems finding and keeping directors. The board has always done a terrific job of stepping up to take on administrative tasks to keep the center running.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

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109.12(4)b: Each infant and toddler shall be diapered in a sanitary manner as frequently as needed at a central diapering area. Diapering, sanitation, and hand-washing procedures shall be posted and implemented in every diapering area. There shall be at least one changing table for every 15 infants.
I observed a diaper change in the infant room. Gloves are considered soiled and must be removed prior to putting on the new diaper and dressing the child. Additionally, the child's hands were not washed following the diaper change. This must always occur.

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. All DHS licensing standards and procedures must be maintained during the renewal period.

Targeted Assessment: Behavior Management:
I discussed with Ms. Scott her oversight of behavior management related to helping childcare staff: 1) Understand expectations, 2) managing frustrations, 3) monitor performance. Ms. Scott states in the moment, the staff members will "tag team" to deal with difficult behaviors. If a staff member is frustrated, they can take a break or change what they are doing and another staff member can step in. Staff members are told in orientation to keep their hands off children. They are to talk with children privately because they do not know the child's history or what they are going through. Ms. Scott states she will take the children on a walk. She states instead of removing the child, they can also move the other children to a new location. If she is in her office staff members can bring a child who is struggling to the office. She states it is hard on the entire room when one child is struggling. Ms. Scott states they have implemented a safe place (such as a calming corner). She states only one person is allowed in the space and staff members cannot use it for time out.

To monitor, Ms. Scott states she pops into rooms. She will do observation and offer help and make sure staff members are okay.

Date: 08/25/2026

HHS Licensing Consultant: Becky Frost

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**.