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

Name of Center: Hand In Hand, Inc. @ Longfellow **Enrollment:** 31 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 52104

Street: 2900 8th AVE **City:** Marion Iowa **Zip** 52302 **County:** Linn

Mailing Address: 103 N Center Point RD, Hiawatha, IA, 52233

Director's Name: Kathy Kolthoff **Phone Number:** 319-200-4840

On-Site Supervisor(s): Maleeyah Lenards **E-Mail:** hih@handinhandinc.com

Date(s) of Visit: 02-09-2024

Licensing Visit X **Unannounced Visit** X **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 **State** X **Local** **NA** **Is Fire Inspection Approved?** X **Yes** **No** **NA**

Date Inspected: 02-15-2023

Comments :

LICENSE TYPE: X **Child Care** **Preschool (ages 3-5 meets three hours or less per day)**

Financial Type: X Profit Non-Profit NA

Accredition: Accredited NAEYC NSACA Other X NA

Program Serves: Infants (0-23 mo.) 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			10	65	75
Summer					0

QRS Rating: N/A

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 02-13-2023 to 03-01-2025
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Amy Lyons **Date:** 02-14-2024

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

Not applicable.

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

Hand in Hand operates multiple programs throughout the community and has been in operation for 21 years. Specifically, Hand in Hand, Inc. @ Longfellow is located inside Longfellow Elementary School which is part of the Marion Independent School District. Hand in Hand, Inc. @ Longfellow commenced operations on 2/13/2023. Hand in Hand, Inc. @ Longfellow is a profit program which operates year-round Monday through Friday 6:30am to 6:00pm. During the summer, full days of emergency closing (e.g. snow day), and some breaks (e.g. winter break, spring break), this program has the ability to combine with other Hand in Hand sites. Hand in Hand, Inc. - Longfellow serves school-age and preschool-age children. Current enrollment is 31.

Hand in Hand multi-site owner/director is Kathy Kolthoff. Ms. Kolthoff holds a degree in Early Childhood Education and Business Management. Ms. Kolthoff has achieved the National Administrators Credential (NAC) and is a member of National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Hand in Hand multi-site management personnel includes Ms. Sara Swestka who has been with Hand in Hand for over 20 years. Ms. Swestka holds her Bachelor of Art Degree in Elementary Education and Early Childhood Education. Ms. Swestka has many years of experience working with children, continues to participate in much child development related training, and has achieved NAC. Hand in Hand multisite curriculum specialist Katie Simmons has been with Hand in Hand for over 18 years, and specifically, been part of the management team since 2011. Ms. Simmons has an AA degree in early childhood education, has much experience working with children, and continues to participate in child development related training. Hand in Hand multi-site school-age coordinators are Katie Little and Katie Marshall. Ms. Little has been with Hand in Hand since December, 2017. Ms. Little has a BA degree in nursing, an AA degree in marketing management, several years experience working with children, and continues to participate in much child development related training. Ms. Marshall has been with Hand in Hand since 2016. Ms. Marshal has a BA degree in early childhood education, has several years experience working with children and continues to participate in much child development related training. Site specific on-site supervisor of Hand in Hand, Inc. @ Longfellow is Olivia Studt. Ms. Studt has a BA degree in history, over 5 years experience working with children at Hand in Hand, and continues to participate in much child development related training.

On 2/9/2024, program space was observed.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

Hand in Hand offers a variety of early learning/childcare programming options to help meet the needs of children and families in the community.

The year 2024 marks Hand in Hand's 22nd year of providing childcare and early learning services to children and their families throughout the community. Congratulations on celebrating 22 years! Specifically, Hand in Hand, Inc. @ Longfellow will be in their 2nd year of operations during 2024.

The philosophy of Hand in Hand is to "…understand your needs and your child's needs and offer convenient options....that go way beyond after school needs...offers a variety of activities that promote life skills such as teamwork, sportsmanship,

creativity, and leadership..."

Hand in Hand has the following website for families and the community to learn more about their programs: http://handinhandinc.com/.

Hand in Hand has a history of participating in quality initiatives including local quality initiatives. Management has talked about future goals related to IQ4K and PBIS training. In 2022, Hand in Hand received a "Certificate of Appreciation" from the Linn Mar Community School District to certify that Hand in Hand made a significant and important contribution to Linn Mar High School and is held in the highest esteem as a member of their school community.

Founding original owner Ms. Kolthoff is a local entrepreneur invested in the local and surrounding communities. Ownership and management of Hand in Hand has remained consistent and seasoned. This includes owner Ms. Kolthoff, management personnel Ms. Swestka, curriculum specialist Ms. Simmons, school-age coordinator Ms. Little, school-age coordinator Ms. Marshall and site-specific supervisor. Management is extremely organized, and in turn, the program operates smoothly. Hand in Hand has noteworthy systems of organization in place to help ensure administrative items are completed and maintained as required. Management is knowledgeable of licensing guidelines as well as their own policies and procedures. Management has completed NAC training.

Management team continues to be mentors throughout the community as well as part of an online innovative national director social media group. Hand in Hand management team also continues to be part of a local task force known as "Building Community Childcare Solutions" which examines childcare needs and solutions. In 2021, Hand in Hand management team established an optional monthly employee wellness challenge to help focus on lowering stress and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. In 2022, Hand in Hand undertook the immense task of establishing a company-wide unique online process for staff onboarding, training, and continuous transfer of knowledge. This also lead to an updating of the company's Employee Manual and a new Lead Teacher Manual both of which have become part of the company's online staff onboarding program. In 2023, management enhanced hiring practices for room lead staff including having new leads rotate shadowing seasoned teachers and hosted semiannual lead staff meetings, (e.g. welcoming idea generation, tapping into specific staff/room expertise, collective linking of resources). In 2023, Hand in Hand added 3 new Marion Independent Community School District school-age childcare locations as well as an additional school-age coordinator position.

Since the last monitoring visit, Hand in Hand, Inc. @ Longfellow has retained staff as well as hired some new staff. Management supports staff professional goals in a variety of ways including through the TEACH and WAGE$ programs. To help support employees, management has established an annual staff requirements calendar book with necessary forms, materials, and so on as well as a quarterly employee newsletter that includes helpful policy reminders and tips and classroom tools/resources. Management continues to support employees through an accrued point system rewarding staff for their daily dedication, through the ability to collaborate among all Hand in Hand sites to share materials, curriculum, joys, challenges, and ideas/planning, and through staff incentives (e.g. childcare, social media contests, wellness challenges, birthday acknowledgement, employee of the month). Staff discussed many successes related to their first year of programming including retaining families during the ownership change as well as increasing enrollment. Ms. Studt indicated being proud of the structure and routines they've implemented which allows the children to building friendships and play well together.

Hand in Hand, Inc. @ Longfellow has a collaborative partnership with the school district. The school building and grounds are well maintained. School custodial staff, school administration, school nurse, and school food service personnel help ensure the children's space is sanitary and hazard free each day. The school kitchen is inspected at least annually by the health department. There is an AED on-site. The program's primary space is located inside the school gymnasium where regular large gross motor activities are able to happen even on inclement weather days. The program is also able to access rooms #301, #305 and #306 when preschool-age programming is happening separate from the combined school-age/preschool-age care (e.g. early outs, 1 hour prior to school dismissing).

Hand in Hand programs have emergency plans, policies, and procedures in place which are annually reviewed and updated as needed. Hand in Hand sites have successfully navigated through the 2008 Linn County flood, 2019 winter Polar Vortex, 2019 health (covid-19) pandemic, 8/10/20 Derecho Storm, 2021 food supply issues, 2022 infant formula shortages and 2023 air quality alerts. In 2023, Hand in Hand began monthly employee safety plan reviews focusing on a series of topics including first-aid, housekeeping, ergonomics, proper lifting, workplace violence, and slips, trips and falls.

Hand in Hand, Inc. @ Longfellow continues efforts at optimal communication between the program/staff and families. The program has an organized parent-staff/program information center, offers regular program newsletters, utilizes technological communication resources, and supports family programming activities. Hand in Hand, Inc. @ Longfellow supports a character counts curriculum offering experiences in teamwork, sportsmanship, leadership and creativity. Curriculum includes a reading incentive program called "Reading Rainbow" and homework time/assistance. Summer camp 2024 school-age registration is currently underway with a new option for a Junior Summer Camp experience. The 2024 summer camp theme is "Never Stop Dreaming" include off-site field trips, theme based activities, Rainbow Reading and in-house events.

Hand in Hand collaborates well with many community partners including local small businesses, local school districts, health professionals, and other childcare owners/directors (locally and nationally).

Each child is engaged in a daily health check upon arrival for early detection of apparent illness, communicable disease, or unusual condition or behavior which may adversely affect the child or the group. The program has policies and procedures in place for hand washing, cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing

On the day of the monitoring visit, staff were nurturing and attentive to the children's needs. Themes for the week included winter and Valentine's. Staff were observed warmly greeting children and families as they arrived for the day's programming. Activities included self-selected play (e.g. magna tiles, card games, crafts) and large gross motor group games. Routine transitions (e.g. clean-up activities, school breakfast rituals) worked smoothly into the program's welcoming and cooperative environment. Staff were overheard providing children with many words of encouragement and offering positive redirection when needed. Children responded well to staff and appeared to be truly enjoying their childcare experiences.

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

None noted.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

The program's license remain in full status. Thank you for the visit.

*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.