Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Jackson Recovery Centers Little Inspirations

Provider No.: 30110

Address: 3200 W 4th St, Sioux City, IA, 51103

County: Woodbury

Director's Name: Melinda Mahlberg

On-Site Supervisor:

Phone Number: 7122584578

E-Mail: mmahlberg@rosecrance.org

HHS Visit Date: 06/04/2026

Licensing Period: 06/01/2025 to 06/01/2027

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 11/05/2025

Comments:

Report Visit Type:

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

License Type:

- [X] Full
- [ ] Provisional

Quality initiative:

Quality Rating: 1

- [ ] Accrediation

Program Duration:

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

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HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*
Sunday			
Monday	7:30 AM to 3:30 PM		
Tuesday	7:30 AM to 3:30 PM		
Wednesday	7:30 AM to 3:30 PM		
Thursday	7:30 AM to 3:30 PM		
Friday	7:30 AM to 3:30 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	12		15	37	64
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

I completed an unannounced visit to the program on 06/04/26. I met with the director, Mindy Mahlberg. Ms. Mahlberg recently obtained her Early Childhood endorsement. She also holds a Child Care Director Certificate and the NAC Administrator Certificate. Ms. Mahlberg has been employed with Little Inspirations since 2017 and has served in various roles throughout her tenure.

Jackson Recovery Centers' Little Inspirations Daycare is located within the Women and Children's Center. The program includes one infant room and a larger classroom serving children ages two and older. The center serves infants through school-age children (up to 5 years old). Children typically remain in the program for 4 weeks to 4 months, as it supports mothers participating in a short-term treatment program who are permitted to have their children with them. Program hours are Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The program currently has 11 children enrolled, with 8 children present on the day of my visit.

All areas of the program were observed during the visit. Observations included classroom environments and activities, nutritional practices, health and safety procedures, playground supervision, field trip and transportation practices, and an administrative records review.

Visual aids support learning by helping children understand and retain information more effectively. They provide concrete, age-appropriate references that reinforce key concepts such as shapes, letters, numbers, and weather. Visual displays also help guide daily routines, support language development, and offer opportunities for children to engage with the environment independently. Additionally, children's artwork contributes to a sense of belonging and encourages creativity and self-expression. Overall, the use of visual aids enhances the learning environment by making information accessible,

engaging, and developmentally appropriate.

The program utilizes the Creative Curriculum, which is a research-based early childhood curriculum designed to support children's development across all learning domains. This curriculum emphasizes learning through play, hands-on exploration, and teacher-guided activities. It provides structured lesson planning while allowing flexibility to follow children's interests. The Creative Curriculum supports development in areas such as social-emotional skills, language and literacy, cognitive development, physical skills, mathematics, science, and the arts. It also guides teachers in creating an engaging classroom environment, observing children's progress, and individualizing instruction based on developmental needs.

Specific redirection techniques observed included offering children's alternative activities when they became disengaged or needed support, using clear verbal prompts to guide children toward appropriate behaviors, and modeling expected actions. Staff also used proximity and gentle reminders to help children stay on task. When needed, staff provided simple choices to help children regain focus and transition smoothly between activities. These strategies were effective in maintaining a positive and orderly classroom environment.

Medication is dispensed by the onsite nurse. The first aid kit was observed to be fully stocked and appropriate for treating minor injuries. Fire and tornado drills need to be documented each month. Good sanitary practices were observed throughout the center. A functioning carbon monoxide detector was present. All program areas were clean, organized, and well maintained. The center has established and follows appropriate health and safety policies and procedures.

Good food storage practices were observed during the visit. The center follows CACFP nutritional guidelines, and the current menus were posted. All meals are prepared onsite.

This worker observed the playground area. The playground is grass-covered, fenced in, and located behind the building. Balls and assorted outdoor toys were available for children's use. All playground equipment was observed to be in good repair. A large shade tree provides additional comfort and protection from the sun in this area. It was noted that children have been riding bicycles on the roadway located just outside the fenced playground area. This practice is not acceptable due to the presence of vehicle traffic on this road and the associated safety risks. A safer alternative would be to add a cemented riding area within the fenced playground space, such as the area beneath the existing shade tree, to ensure all bike-riding activities occur in a secure and supervised environment.

Their goal is to increase enrollment. Mindi is also continuing her education.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

Staff have been working together for a significant period of time. Long-term staff relationships contribute to a stable and predictable environment for children. When staff know each other well, they communicate more effectively, coordinate supervision smoothly, and maintain consistent expectations and routines. This familiarity supports a positive team atmosphere and enhances the overall quality of care provided to the children. Continuity among staff also strengthens relationships with families and helps maintain a cohesive program culture.

This center is currently rated at IQ4K Level 1, which reflects that the program meets all foundational requirements of Iowa's Quality Rating and Improvement System. Level 1 programs demonstrate compliance with essential health and safety practices, maintain required staff training and professional development, provide family orientation, and implement basic policies that support positive learning environments. This level indicates the center has established the groundwork for quality improvement and is positioned to progress toward higher IQ4K levels.

This center operates within a substance abuse treatment facility, allowing mothers to remain with their children while they work toward achieving and maintaining sobriety. This arrangement supports family stability and helps ensure that children continue to receive consistent care during the mother's treatment process.

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3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

109.11(4)a: Center must have safe outdoor program area adjacent to the center, with sufficient square footage to accommodate at least 30 percent of the enrollment capacity at any one time at 75 spear feet per child. Outdoor space must: Be free from litter and unsafe materials and free from contamination by the drainage or ponding of sewage or storm water. Include safe play equipment and an area of shade. Include fencing to protect from bodies of water or vehicular traffic.

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

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

Targeted Assessment: Behavior Management

I discussed with Mindi her oversight of behavior management related to helping childcare staff: 1) Understand expectations, 2) managing frustrations, 3) monitor performance.

Mindi explained that, because this is a small center, staff and the director are generally in the same room throughout the day. This close proximity allows them to observe one another's interactions in real time. She stated that they are able to recognize when a staff member is becoming stressed and can step in to provide support as needed. This approach helps maintain consistent expectations and promotes a collaborative and responsive work environment.

The program needs to email consultant by 08/01/26 with ideas regarding the plan for the playground area.

A full license is recommended at this time at this time.

At least one visit will be made to the center during the next year.

Date: 06/05/2026

HHS Licensing Consultant: Leann Steinhauer

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**.