Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Rivers Edge Childcare Center

Provider No.: 53144

Address: 701 E 18th St, Spencer, IA, 51301

County: Clay

Director's Name: Gracie Damman

On-Site Supervisor:

Phone Number: 7125803013

E-Mail: director.childcare@respencer.org

HHS Visit Date: 08/12/2026

Licensing Period: 05/01/2026 to 05/01/2028

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 03/02/2026

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	6:00 AM to 5:30 PM		
Tuesday	6:00 AM to 5:30 PM		
Wednesday	6:00 AM to 5:30 PM		
Thursday	6:00 AM to 5:30 PM		
Friday	6:00 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	9	9	16		34
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

I conducted an unannounced licensing visit at River's Edge Childcare Center on August 12, 2026. During the visit, I met with Director Gracie Damman, who provided information regarding current operations and staffing. Gracie has many years of experience in the childcare field and has completed ECERS training. She explained that this training has strengthened her ability to assess classroom environments, support quality improvements, and ensure that developmentally appropriate practices are consistently implemented throughout the center.

The daycare center is located within River's Edge Church in Spencer, Iowa. The program currently utilizes three classrooms to provide care for children ages 6 weeks through 4 years. The director reported that the center is exploring opportunities to expand enrollment in the future, including the possibility of adding a before- and after-school program to better meet the needs of families in the community. A portion of River's Edge Church has been remodeled and purposefully designed to accommodate the daycare program. This area includes a secure entrance where families access the building using an electronic fob system or are let in directly by a staff member. The controlled entry supports strong safety practices and ensures that only authorized individuals are able to enter the childcare space.

There are 22 children enrolled in the center. There are 11 children present when I completed my visit.

I observed all areas of the center, including classrooms, activities, nutrition practices, health and safety procedures, playground, and administrative review.

Upon entering the center, visitors are greeted by a decorative wall honoring donors. The display features children blowing bubbles, with donor names incorporated into the bubble designs. This presentation reflects the center's appreciation for the

community support that has contributed to the program's development. The interior space offers abundant natural light, as each room contains multiple windows that create a bright and welcoming environment. Throughout the classrooms, there are numerous visual aids, including clear photographs of items used in daily activities. Additionally, staff have posted pictures of enrolled children accompanied by short descriptions of who they are and what they enjoy, supporting a warm, individualized atmosphere and helping children feel recognized within their environment.

The interior space offers abundant natural light, as each room contains multiple windows that create a bright and welcoming environment. The center utilizes the ABC Jesus Loves Me curriculum. ABC Jesus Loves Me is a Bible-centered, play-based preschool curriculum designed for children ages 1–5. It combines faith-based learning with early academic and developmental milestones, through intentionally planned, engaging activities. Throughout the classrooms, there are numerous display materials, including clear photographs of items used in daily activities. Additionally, staff have posted pictures of enrolled children accompanied by short descriptions of who they are and what they enjoy, supporting a warm, individualized atmosphere and helping children feel recognized within their environment.

I observed staff engaging with children at their level, which supports healthy social-emotional development by helping children feel understood and secure, encouraging positive peer interactions, and strengthening children's confidence in communicating their needs and feelings.

Radon testing has not yet been completed and still needs to be conducted. Gracie was advised to contact CNC Becky Fielder for guidance on scheduling and completing the required testing. The center installed a new HVAC system prior to opening. Fire and tornado drills, as well as the monthly playground inspection, were not completed in July and will need to be brought up to date to ensure compliance with licensing requirements. The center does not provide transportation. Medication storage was reviewed and found to be organized and scored appropriately, and first aid kits were well maintained. An emergency preparedness plan has been completed. CCRR Specialist Jessica will assist Gracie in accessing the fillable online version of the plan to ensure it is fully updated and available as required.

The center receives its meals from Hy-Vee. Food storage areas were reviewed and found to be simple and organized; however, all items must be dated to ensure freshness and compliance with food safety practices. The program hopes to transition to preparing meals in its own kitchen in the future. The kitchen was clean, well-maintained, and organized at the time of the visit. Menus were posted, and the center follows CACFP guidelines, with plans to fully utilize the program moving forward.

The center has a well-organized playground designed to separate younger children from older ones, ensuring developmentally appropriate play spaces. The playground equipment was in good working order, and the area included a comfortable shaded section that provides protection from the sun during outdoor play.

The center's long-term goals include increasing enrollment, developing a school-age program, and obtaining IQ4K certification. Gracie is also nearing completion of her CDA credential, which will further support the center's commitment to high-quality care and continued professional development.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

The center has done a remarkable job of engaging community support through fundraisers, corporate partnerships, and grant writing efforts led by the director..

Gracie has committed to working closely with the area CCRR consultant and to participating in financial coaching opportunities. Partnering with CCRR provides valuable access to free support, high-quality resources, and training opportunities, all of which will help strengthen the center's operations and continued growth.

Staff were actively engaged with the children in their care. I observed a diaper change that was completed in a textbook manner, following appropriate procedures and maintaining positive interaction with the child throughout. Gracie has a committed team of staff who work well together and demonstrate supportive communication. I also observed a staff member responding to a crying child; the intervention was handled appropriately, and the child was quickly able to self-regulate and move on.

The center utilizes a camera system with both video and audio capabilities, which supports ongoing observation of staff–child interactions and enhances overall supervision and safety practices.

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3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

109.6(4)d: Center repeats national criminal history checks at a minimum of every four years or when aware of additional history that occurs.

109.7(2): Center directors and all staff have the required contact hours of training.

109.10(13)b: Emergency instructions, phone numbers, and diagrams for fire, tornado, and flood shall be visibly posted and documented at least once a month for fire and tornado. Records shall be maintained for current and previous year.

109.11(4)b: Record of monthly inspections of outdoor recreation area and equipment shall be kept.

109.11(8)b: Centers at ground level that use basement area as program space, or have a basement beneath program space: Testing and plan for remedy of radon is conducted.

109.12(4)c: Highchairs or hook-on seats shall be equipped with a safety strap that shall be engaged when the chair is in use and shall be constructed so the chair will not topple.

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 Gracie regarding her oversight of behavior management related to helping childcare staff: 1) Understand expectations, 2) managing frustrations, 3) monitor performance.

In discussing classroom behavior management with Gracie, she explained that staff clearly understand her expectations, which are outlined in the center's handbook that all employees are required to review and sign. Gracie is frequently present in the classrooms, role-modeling effective strategies and supporting staff in maintaining consistent, developmentally appropriate practices. She also utilizes the camera system to observe staff interactions, provide feedback, and identify areas of strength as well as moments requiring intervention. Staff reported that they feel comfortable reaching out to Gracie for assistance at any time, and they also expressed confidence in seeking support from one another within the classroom.

Please provide necessary records to me by 10/31/26. Please cooperate with CCRR consultant, Jessica Reyes and Financial Coach, Allison Gollohofer.

6. ADDENDUMS:

- Addendum1: I completed a room measurement at this center today. The Capacity will change to 37. Infant 9 - Toddler 12 and preschool 16.

This Addendum is approved by supervisor on 10/16/2026 4:25:57 PM

Date: 08/13/2026

HHS Licensing Consultant: Leann Steinhauer

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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**.