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

Name of Center: Growing Minds Early Learning Center **Enrollment:** 54 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 30419

Street: 608 West 4th ST **City:** Waterloo Iowa **Zip** 50702 **County:** Black Hawk

Mailing Address: 608 W 4th ST, Waterloo, IA, 50702

Director's Name: Meghan MacMullen & Ed Gruenwald **Phone Number:** 319-236-2063

On-Site Supervisor(s): Mary Neisen **E-Mail:** grinandgrow10@gmail.com

Date(s) of Visit: 06-24-2025

X **Licensing Visit** X **Unannounced Visit** **Off Year Visit** X **Administrative Change**

LICENSING VISITS

New Application X **Re-Application** **NA**

Signed Application (470-0722) Received X **Yes** **No** **NA** **Date Signed:** 06-12-2025

FIRE INSPECTION **State** X **Local** **NA** **Is Fire Inspection Approved?** X **Yes** **No** **NA**

Date Inspected: 10-14-2024

Comments :

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

Financial Type: Profit X Non-Profit NA

Accredition: Accredited NAEYC NSACA Other X NA

Program Serves: X Infants (0-23 mo.) X 2 Years X Preschool-Age School-Age

Get-Well Evening Care Special Needs

SCHEDULE: X Year-round School-Year Summer Only

HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summary Only*

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Age	Capacity
General	15	23	60	0	98
Summer					0

QRS Rating: 1

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 08-01-2025 to 08-01-2027
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Becky Frost **Date:** 08-05-2025

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

N/A

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

On 06/24/25 I made an unannounced licensing visit to Growing Minds Early Learning Center, previously known as Grin and Grow Ltd-West 4th Street, in Waterloo. I met with Meghan MacMullen (formally Meghan Smith), the co-director and Mary Neisen, the on-site supervisor/program coordinator. Ms. MacMullen started with the program in January 2023. She has an AA in education and several years of experience in childcare. Ms. Niesen has mostly been with the program since 1995. She left the center in May 2019 but returned in January 2020. Ms. Neisen has her CDA. I also briefly met with Ed Gruenwald, the co-director of the program/director of operations and development for the center. Mr. Gruenwald started with the program in October 2019 and became the co-director in January 2022. He has an MS in forest recreation resource management. The center employes 17 staff members.

The childcare center was founded in 1943. The center is located inside the First Congregational United Church of Christ, but the program is not affiliated with the church. The program operates Monday through Friday from 6:00 am until 6:00 pm. It serves children who are infants until they start Kindergarten. There are currently 54 children enrolled.

The program utilizes the following classrooms: infant room (Little Ducklings), toddler room (Cardinals), two-year-old room (Parrots), two and one-half through three-year-old room (Penguins), three-year-old room (Blue Jays) and a four and five-year-old room (Flamingos). An inspection of each room was completed. Windows provide natural lighting. The rooms are decorated with the children's art projects, and posters to assist the children with the learning process, such as the alphabet, shapes, colors and numbers. The children's birthdays were posted. There is an area for circle time in the rooms for the older children.

The centers observed on the day of the licensing visit include library, Lego/blocks, table toys, games, puzzles, playdough, transportation, art, dramatic play, writing, math, science/discovery, woodworking, 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 are two bathrooms in the hallway on the upper level that are used by the children. The boy's bathroom has one toilet; two urinals and two sinks and the girl's bathroom has two toilets and two sinks. There is also a changing table in the girl's bathroom. Handwashing and diaper changing procedures were posted. There are two bathrooms and a changing table that are shared by the Cardinals and Parrot's room. Each bathroom has one toilet and one sink and procedures were posted. There are additional bathrooms in the church.

The program uses a variety of resources to develop their lesson plans. Activities are based on weekly themes. Each teacher prepares their own lesson plans. The preschool children receive ASQ assessments. Lesson plans were available to review in each room. The program offers free preschool for three and four-year-old children for the families who qualify through ECI-Cedar Valley Promise. This is a state grant. The free preschool is Monday through Friday 8:00 am until 1:00 pm. The center uses Tucker Turtle "turtle techniques" to help children learn to calm themselves.

There was a phone with emergency numbers in the classrooms and kitchen with the center's address and phone number. Emergency fire and tornado procedures and evacuation diagrams were posted by the program doors and outdoor exits throughout the center. Daily schedules were posted in each room.

I reviewed documentation of monthly fire and tornado drills. I reviewed documentation of monthly playground inspections. A radon test was completed in June 2025 and must be repeated in five years. You must test each program room next time you conduct radon tests. The annual fuel burning inspection was completed and no concerns were noted. A carbon monoxide detector was on site in each of the classrooms and the kitchen. Outlets were protected. The fire marshal inspection occurred on 10/14/24.

The program uses the Brightwheel app to complete daily sheets for the children under the age of two. They are also completing paper daily sheets. The app is also used to communicate with all families.

I observed and/or discussed diaper changing procedures with staff members. In the infant room the staff member did not remove her gloves prior to putting on the child's new diaper and she did not wash the child's hands. Gloves ae considered soiled and must be removed prior to putting on the new diaper. All children must have their hands washed with soap and water following a diaper change.

The center participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The center provides breakfast, lunch and a morning and afternoon snack. Arnetha VanArsdale is the cook. Ms. VanArsdale states that Jaymee Lough makes a new menu each week. Menus are posted outside each of the classrooms on the parent board.

The center provides formula, cereal and baby food for the infants. Bottles are being washed in the classroom, but they are not being sanitized. Bottles and all dishes must be cleaned and sanitized. You can do this in the classroom by doing a bleach dip.

The kitchen was observed. The children's dietary special needs were posted. There is one refrigerator and thermometers were present. There is an additional refrigerator and upright freezer in the basement and thermometers were present. An industrial dishwasher is used to wash dishes. There are also two sinks available. The pantry is located off the Blue Jay classroom. Food items were stored according to NHSPS guidelines.

There are refrigerators in each childcare room and thermometers were present. The thermometer in the Cardinals room was 55 degrees. Please keep an eye on this because the temperature should be forty degrees or lower. Allergies were posted in the classrooms.

Member's Mark Sanitizer is used to sanitize the food tables and Clorox All Purpose Disinfectant is used to disinfect the changing tables.

Cribs are used to nap in the infant room and cots are used in the other rooms.

The parent information is located 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 church has a fenced in playground area that is used by the childcare center. Woodchips are used for fall surfacing. There is a piece of climbing equipment with a slide. There is a grassy area that has a couple tunnels. There is a slide on the grass that requires fall surfacing because it has a fall height greater than 18 inches. Please move this to the woodchip area. Trees provide shade. There is a sandbox.

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

I reviewed three 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.

Staff members were enthusiastic and had fun learning activities for the children. They interacted with the children at their level and introduced them to activities. They encouraged the children to use their imaginations during play and while making crafts. Staff members counted the children as they left the room to go outside. Staff members were nurturing while holding children on their laps and rubbing their backs. They provided the children with good handwashing reminders and many sang with the children as they washed their hands. Staff members were flexible with their schedules and talked with children in a positive and calming manner. They provided the children with praise and used positive redirection when necessary. They took the children outside to enjoy the nice weather. Staff members talked with the children about taking turns They had good knowledge of the children's routine.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

Ms. MacMullen states they go the extra mile for their families. If they have parents who do not talk English, they will use the Google translation service or come up with other creative ideas to communicate. They want all their families to feel heard.

Ms. Neisen states they have a great group of staff members with low turnover.

Ms. MacMullen states several staff members speak different languages and they will help translate for parents or make phone calls.

Ms. Niesen has several years of experience with Growing Minds and has a good grasp of administrative duties.

Ms. MacMullen, Ms. Neisen and Jaymee Lough are doing observations in the classroom. Ms. Lough is in the classrooms every day. She meets with staff members and gives them the opportunity to speak their minds.

The administrative team has good relationships with one another and good teamwork. Everyone plays a role.

The program has an IQ4K level of 1 that expires on 11/30/26.

The center has organized easy to read staff and children's files.

The center is in a secure building and there are cameras in the classrooms.

Staff members are good at getting the children outside for gross motor play.

The center uses the Brightwheel app to communicate with parents.

Staff members receive childcare benefits for working at the center. After one month of employment, they receive 100% discount off their oldest child, 50 % off their next oldest child and 25% off the next oldest child during the hours the employee is working or while they are on paid time off.

The center has scholarships to assist with childcare fees.

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

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.
In the infant room the staff member did not remove her gloves prior to putting on the child's new diaper and she did not wash the child's hands. Gloves ae considered soiled and must be removed prior to putting on the new diaper. All children must have their hands washed with soap and water following a diaper change.

109.13(3)f: Cleaned and sanitized bottles and nipples shall be used for bottles prepared on site. Prepared bottles shall be kept under refrigeration when not in use.
Bottles are being washed in the classroom, but they are not being sanitized. Bottles and all dishes must be cleaned and sanitized. You can do this in the classroom by doing a bleach dip.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

A full license is issued. All DHS licensing standards and procedures must be maintained during the renewal period.

An administrative change is being made to change Meghan Smith's last name to MacMullen.

*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.