

CHILD CARE CENTER COMPLAINT

Name of Center:	Fort Dodge Head Start	Enrollment:	76	License ID:	18043
Street:	3611 Maple Dr	City:	Fort Dodge	IA Zip Code:	50501
County:	Webster				
Mailing Address:	214 S 13th St				
Mailing City:	Fort Dodge	IA Zip Code:	50501		
Director's Name:	Michelle Carden	Center Phone Number:	515-573-2882		
On-Site Supervisors:	Terri Adkins	E-Mail Address:	mcarden@yourhs-ehs.org		

Date of Complaint: 08-31-2026**Date of Visit:** 09-02-2026☒ Scheduled ☐ Unannounced ☐ NA☒ Non-Compliance with Regulations Found ☐ Compliance with Regulations Found**RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE**☒ NO CHANGES to licensing status recommended☐ PROVISIONAL license from _____ to _____☐ SUSPENSION of License☐ REVOCATION of License

Complaint Details:Did this complaint result in a serious injury? ☐ Yes ☒ NoDid this complaint result in a death to a child? ☐ Yes ☒ No**Summary of Complaint:**

A complaint was received that a child was found by a community member wandering unsupervised outside of the Fort Dodge Head Start.

Licensing Rules Relevant to the Complaint:

109.10(14)a The center and supervisor shall ensure that staff knows names and number of children assigned. Staff shall provide careful supervision.

Inspection Findings:

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A scheduled visit was made to the Fort Dodge Head Start - Maple Drive center on 09-02-26 by DHHS co-workers Tague, Laurie, Amanda Stone, and myself. We were able to meet with several of the teachers, (DC, JK, and LK) that were identified as being in the classroom the child had been in at the time the child eloped from the center. All provided consistent and credible statements that the child had been in the classroom before leaving. All identified that the classroom programming starts at around 8:20 AM and that the child had arrived earlier and spent time in another group, "Early Bird" which is a daycare type of program for children that arrive before classrooms are ready. It was confirmed that when children enter the classroom the teachers check each child into the classroom on an I-Pad device using a name to face system. All stated that they began the programming day with Morning Meeting, and then were doing a Music and Movement activity for which the child was present. All stated that at some point during the music and movement activity they heard the door open and close. All stated they looked but did not see anyone and noted that it is not unusual that other staff will peek/look in on the class. All stated that as they finished the music and movement activity some teachers began assisting the children with toileting and other activities and one teacher (LK) stated that she noticed the child was missing and so looked around the room and checked in the restroom but did not find the child. JK stated that it was at this same time that she went to turn off the radio/speakers which was located near the large picture window that looks out on the parking lot when she observed an unknown woman walking the child back to the center. JK stated that she went out and retrieved the child and then informed her supervisor of the incident.

The center does have a video surveillance system with both interior and exterior cameras. We were able to review the video which showed a date stamp of 08-31-26 at 8:45 AM for the interior view of the classroom. The teachers and children were observed to be engaged in the music and movement activity and the child identified in the complaint was part of the group that was actively participating. The child is then seen to walk between two of the teachers who do react in a manner that they clearly saw the child walk between them. The child is seen to walk steadily and directly to the door, open the door, and exit the classroom closing the door behind them. The teachers can be seen reacting to the sound of the door looking around the room and then returning to the music and movement activity. A new camera angle from the hallway shows the child exit the classroom and walk steadily and directly to an exit door from the building. New camera angles from the exterior of the building show the child at 8:42 AM. It is noted that the time discrepancy was due to the interior and exterior cameras not being properly synced to the same time. The child is seen walking from the door to the east along the front of the building, and then following the building and property moving north toward a road. Due to camera angles and building overhangs the child cannot be observed the entire time but based on brief glimpses of the child stepping back into frame it does not appear that the child left the property or wandered out into the traffic lanes. A community member is seen to pull into the entrance of the parking lot at 8:49 AM, move to the child, and then bring the child back toward the building where the teacher JK is seen to meet them in the parking lot and resume custody of the child.

Based on the information obtained this complaint is SUBSTANTIATED for violation of Licensing Standard 109.10(14)a The center and supervisor shall ensure that staff knows names and number of children assigned. Staff shall provide careful supervision.

-- All parties provided consistent and credible information that child was in attendance at the Head Start program. All confirmed that the child had been checked in using a name to face recognition system and the teachers in the classroom were aware of the child being part of the class. All stated that they were unaware the child had left the classroom until one of the teachers was looking out classroom window and observed the child being led back to the building by an unknown community member. Video surveillance footage does show that the child was present in the classroom participating in a group activity and then walked between two teachers, across the room, out the door, out a building entry door, and then along the front of the building. While exact timeframes cannot be determined due to improperly synched interior and exterior cameras it can be closely estimated that the child was unsupervised for 7 to 8 minutes based on the exterior camera views when the child comes into frame at 8:42 AM and remain outside unsupervised until 8:49 AM when the child is returned to the custody of the classroom teacher.

Special Notes and Action Required:

This complaint is SUBSTANTIATED the all parties did acknowledge and accept responsibility for the incident. The center administration has reviewed the incident and identified several action steps to address the concern and reduce the risk of future situations. The center has installed door alarms on the classroom doors and is exploring options for main entry doors, eliminated the practice of "looking in" on classrooms where visitors are now expected to fully enter the room and be acknowledged, and staff that were present in the classroom will complete Active Supervision training courses. No further actions are required or recommended. A full license will remain in effect at this time.

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Consultant's Signature:

Ray Salisbury

Date:

09-02-2026