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

Name of Center: Growing Tree Early Learning Center **Enrollment:** 44 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 52027

Street: 10000 Meredith DR **City:** Urbandale Iowa **Zip** 50322 **County:** Polk

Mailing Address: 10000 Meredith DR, Urbandale, IA, 50322

Director's Name: Jodi Defenbaugh **Phone Number:** 515-309-3390

On-Site Supervisor(s): Ashley Defenbaugh **E-Mail:** Enrollment@growingtreeelc.com jodi@growingtreeelc.com

Date(s) of Visit: 01-16-2025

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

LICENSING VISITS

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

Signed Application (470-0722) Received X **Yes** **No** **NA** **Date Signed:** 01-10-2025

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

Date Inspected: 03-18-2024

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: 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*	*Summer Only*

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Age	Capacity
General	20	12	33		65
Summer					0

QRS Rating: N/A

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 02-01-2025 to 02-01-2027
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Melinda Larson, Child Care Licensing Consultant **Date:** 01-20-2025

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

N/A

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

Growing Tree Early Education Center opened at this location on 10/31/22. Cindy Kniss and Jodi Defenbaugh are the owners. Cindy Kniss is the owner of two other centers in Iowa and will be the director of this center at this time. Cindy has a Bachelor's degree in Education and has been the owner/director of Formative Years Childcare Center in Ames, Iowa since 2017. Ashley Defenbaugh is the on-site supervisor as of December of 2022. Ashley has three prior years of experience in a childcare setting prior to taking this role and meets qualifications for this position.

An unannounced visit was completed on today's date. Cindy assisted with today's visit. Mandatory postings are posted at the center's entrance. Classrooms are well furnished with age appropriate furnishings, supplies and toys. Children's coats and belongings are kept in cubbies.

There were eight infants present in the infant classroom. Two staff were working in this room. There were four toddlers in the toddler classroom. One staff was working in this classroom. In the 2's classroom, there were ten children present. Two children were working with this group. There were eight children present in the 3's classroom. Two staff were working in this class. There were four children present in the 4/5's class. One staff was working in this classroom. Children were observed during child directed play activities. Some children were observed during lunch. Staff were leading activities of dancing with music and reading as groups.

The center serves morning snack, lunch and afternoon snack. The center has a full kitchen. The assistant director cooks for the center. Menus were reviewed and show compliance with CACFP requirements. Today's lunch was sunbutter and jelly sandwiches, carrots, apple sauce and milk.

The center has two playground areas: one for toddlers and one for preschool age children. There is rubber tile and rubber mulch for surfacing material. There is shading in place. The center has completed monthly playground checks.

The center doesn't provide transportation.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

The center identified the following as their strengths:

Family owned and operated. Management is friendly and organized. The center receives strong support from the owners.
Enrollment is steady with waiting list.
Center provides small class sizes.
The center has good room set up with classrooms that are well supplied with age-appropriate toys/equipment and centers.
The facility and equipment are well maintained.

The center has strong communication between staff and families. The center uses Brightwheel for daily notes and communication with families. Every classroom has a tablet.
Security system with secure entrance. There are cameras in all classrooms and playground areas.
The center uses Creative Curriculum which is a strong, well rounded and balanced curriculum.
The center sends newsletters monthly and has a Facebook page and website.
The center provides well-balanced and healthy meals and snacks for the children.
Long term, educated staff. The Director holds a Bachelors in Early Childhood Education.
The staff work well together and are a good team. They are knowledgeable and work hard.
The center provides training for staff prior to new staff being placed in the classrooms, as well as mentoring. The management team conducts a 90-day evaluations with staff after they are hired. They also conduct visits to the classrooms to check in on teachers/staff.
Staff can participate in the WAGES program and the TEACH program.
The center partners with AEA.

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

There were no licensing violations cited today.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

The center has a full license.

A set of cots were placed vertically against a wall in the 3's classroom, which can create a topple hazard. This was being addressed during 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.