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

Name of Center: Redeemer Lutheran Preschool & Day Care **Enrollment:** 134 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 22048

Street: 301 S Main ST **City:** Ventura Iowa **Zip** 50482 **County:** Cerro Gordo

Mailing Address: PO Box 138, Ventura, IA, 50482

Director's Name: Kari Johnson Markla **Phone Number:** 641-829-3615

On-Site Supervisor(s): Sandy Watson **E-Mail:** psdc98@gmail.com

Date(s) of Visit: 05-15-2025, 06-05-2025

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

LICENSING VISITS

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

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

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

Date Inspected: 03-05-2024

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 X 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	26		111	23	160
Summer					0

QRS Rating: 1

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 06-01-2024 to 06-01-2026
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Raymond Salsbury **Date:** 06-11-2025

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

NA

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

An unannounced annual visit was made to the Redeemer Lutheran Preschool & Daycare on on 05-15-25, and again on 06-05-25 where I met with center director Kari Markla, and on-site supervisor Sandy Watson. Both are well qualified for the positions they hold with extensive experience and training in early childhood care. The program operates on a campus model with utilizing several classrooms in a building that was previously an elementary school located directly across the street from the main programming location at the Redeemer Lutheran Church in Ventura. Kari acts as the overall director but primarily oversees the operations of the preschool and school age programming at the school location. Sandy oversees the operation of the of the church location serving the infants, toddlers, and 3 year old children. The center is operated as a non-profit program overseen by a board of directors from the church. The center offers full range daycare programming to infants through school age children, and formal preschool programming during the school year. The formal preschool program operates in 4 sessions with an AM & PM class on MWF for 4 year old children, and an AM and PM class on TTH for 3 year old children. The program currently has 134 children enrolled between the two locations and all of the offered programming. There are currently 24 teachers employed by the center. All aspects of the program subject to licensing standards were reviewed.

As noted the program is housed in two buildings and the general design and layout of the buildings and rooms remains the same as in past reports for the church location but there was some expansion with the school location. The center purchased the building and is now the sole occupant of the building with the other tenants having moved out. The center now makes use of the 4 classrooms, kitchen, and gymnasium that were previously used for the formal preschool program, but now make use of 2 additional rooms which are used for napping, and a larger space that was used as the school library. The larger library area is used as a common space by each age group/classroom where children can engage in activities such as reading, board games, art/crafts, and other quiet/calm activities. The two formal preschool classrooms are connected by a small pass-through entry coat area that provides direct secondary egress to the outdoors and the playground area. The classrooms are divided by age, and use intent with one for the 4 year old preschool and the other for the 3 year old preschool. School age programming is located in two classrooms across the hallway from the preschool rooms, and as noted the other two classrooms are used for napping where cots are arranged and kept out at all times. Each classroom in this building has a traditional school room design of a large open area with windows located along the exterior walls to provide natural light, a view of the outdoors, and ventilation. Each room has sinks located in the room to facilitate hand washing. The two preschool rooms have toilets directly accessible from the classroom, and additional toilets are located off the main corridor. Each room was observed to be clean with no issues noted due to maintenance.

The daycare programming is provided in the original location of the Redeemer Lutheran Church making use of classrooms on two levels. The general layout and design remain the same as in prior visits. The lower level has an infant room used for older mobile infants, and a larger area for 2-3 year old children. The space for the 2-3 year old children is divided by a mobile fence system into an area with tables used primarily for meal service but also for some programming when children need a flat stable work surface, and a primary programming area with activity centers. Restroom facilities and changing stations are located outside the main programming spaces and children are escorted to the bathroom when needed. There are several entrances to the space including the main entry, a doorway that provides direct access to the outdoors, and a secondary exit providing access to the upper level. The upper level has two classrooms for infants, and another room that is

available as additional programming space for the preschool children if needed. The two infant rooms have a secondary exit providing direct access to the outdoors. Restroom facilities are located off a main access hallway. Windows along the exterior walls provide natural light, ventilation, and a view of the outdoors on the upper level. The windows of the lower level are located along the upper edge of the wall and so do not provide much of a view. The maintenance issues previously identified including a damaged electrical box have been repaired and no additional concerns regarding maintenance were observed during the current visit. Each room of both locations are divided into activity centers through the placement of furniture and play structures that are arranged so as not to create any blind areas. The toys and materials present were generally observed to be in good repair and appropriate to the ages of the children present but there were toys in the 2-3 year old classroom with small parts that could break off which would be less than 1 1/4 inches diameter and 2 1/4 inches length which would be a choking hazard and need to be removed from classrooms serving children under 3 years of age.

Interactions and supervision were mixed at both locations and on each day of the visits. All staff provided assistance and support to children for specific care activities such as toileting/diapering, and meal service when there were defined tasks to be completed. In more general programming activities such as when the children were engaged in self-directed play several staff were less engaged providing more observational supervision. This did lead to some situations where children would engage in activities of escalating excitement resulting in minor behavioral concerns and conflict. The teachers did intervene when issues related to individual safety or peer conflict arose. Other staff were actively engaged with the children in their play. This difference in interaction did result in situations where staff who were more engaged were able to use positive behavioral supports and interventions to encourage appropriate behavior, and the staff who provided more observational supervision using more reactive approaches that focused on consequences for behavior. With regard to supervision one issue that was observed with the school age children was when the children were transitioning from the playground to snack service. The children and staff did enter the building and the staff provided good supervision with escorting children to restrooms and observing hand washing. As the children moved through washing their hands staff did take the large majority of the children to the cafeteria area leaving 1 staff to finish supervising the children that were finishing up. As children finished with toileting and hand washing the teacher allowed them to leave the room and go to the cafeteria area on their own. In dividing the group there was no discussion between staff regarding which children each was responsible for. This resulted in those children being allowed to walk between the classroom and the cafeteria being unsupervised, and the staff not being aware of which children were still in the classroom such that after the children who were washing their hands were finished and the teacher left the room there was one child that was still making use of the toilet that was left completely alone.

Good health and safety practices were observed on the day of the visit. I was able to observe diaper changes while at the center and required procedures were followed. Chemical cleaners, medications, and personal belongings that could pose a safety risk to children were stored in areas where they were not accessible to children. Good safe sleep practices were observed for those infants under 1 year of age. Good feeding positioning was observed for infants with children being held in an upright position not only for those under 6 months of age as required but for all infants. First aid kits are maintained at both locations and contain materials necessary to address most common first aid needs. Good hand washing practices were observed during the time of my visit for both staff and children.

Playground facilities are located at both locations with a more traditional school playground at the school site that contains some climbing structures and swings that were left by the elementary school. The playground at the church location has a commercial grade climbing structure that was installed in 2024 which makes use of a unitary pour in place fall surfacing. With the removal of the wooden structure the support legs had been cut at ground level with the anchored portion still present but Sandy stated that these are scheduled to be removed. The rubber tiles used for fall surfacing were also left in place. Shade is provided by mature trees along the edge of the playground. The space if fully enclosed by chain link fencing which was in good repair. With the school location the center has installed a new commercial climbing structure and other equipment which again makes use of a unitary pour in place fall surfacing for the preschool age children. That playground is fully enclosed by fencing which was in good repair. The older playground space and equipment left by the school includes large climbing and slide structures, and swings which use pea gravel for fall surfacing. The pea gravel had developed a hard pan layer in high traffic areas and needs to be aerated or supplemented to ensure a proper depth of material. The equipment was observed to be in good repair but the S hooks of the swings do need to be pinched closed so that is no more than 1mm distance between the ends of the hooks and the barrel to prevent clothing from getting caught in the opening. The center did construct a gagaball pit as a new activity option for the children on the playground. The playground also has a large open grassy area, and a paved area where the children can play. In addition to the playground the center has access to an indoor gymnasium space which also serves as the cafeteria area.

The center has a full kitchen located in both locations where meals are prepared for that location. Both kitchens were observed to be clean. Good food storage and handling practices were observed in both locations. I was able to observe the snack and lunch service at both locations between the visits. The staff did wear food service gloves, and used measured scoops when plating food for the children. While the teachers did not eat with the children supervision was provided at the tables. A copy of the planned menu was present for both locations and identify a good variety of nutritious meal and snack options. Items that have a high choking potential are supplemented for younger children, and staff do cut items into bite sized pieces.

In reviewing required postings a copy of the License Certificate was not posted at entry for the church location and now that the program owns the school location the postings for License Certificate, Consultant Contact, Mandatory Abuse Reporting, and No Smoking need to be moved to the main entry area. Other required postings for diapering procedures, hand washing, and evacuation were generally present but were missing in some locations. As a reminder these postings are required to be present with evacuation postings by all exits from programming spaces, hand washing by all sinks used for that purpose, and changing procedures by all changing stations. The center makes use of both a computer based information management system, (Brightwheel), and hard copy files. A selection of random files were reviewed for both staff and children during the first visit and substantial concerns were noted. In reviewing children's files most did have a current physical, but there was no documentation of parents having reviewed their children's files to ensure that the information was current, and to reauthorize permissions. In reviewing staff files many were missing current Iowa SING and FBI background checks, and physicals. The center instructed to update background checks, and establish a plan to obtain the other required documentation. At the time of the follow-up visit the center had updated the Iowa SING and FBI background checks but several were incomplete for staff who required a Record Check Evaluation. The center was provided with the forms and instructions to complete those evaluations. The center had established a compliance date for families to update child files, and for staff to provide documentation of physicals and training. In reviewing inspection logs and certificates a current Fuel Burning Appliances inspection was not available for the church location. As a reminder all fuel burning appliances must be inspected annually to ensure that they are in good working order with no gas or carbon monoxide leaks. This should be done in the fall prior to the start of the heating season and can be completed by any licensed or certified HVAC technician and either a copy of the bill showing work completed, or a statement of proper function from the technician maintained. Fire and Tornado drills were also not conducted/documented for May thru December 2024 for the church location, but were current for the school location. As a reminder both drills must be conducted and documentation maintained for both fire and tornado drills each month for each location. Radon testing was available for both locations and was just above the cutoff level within the margins of error for the church location and a more accurate long term test should be completed to determine if levels are within acceptable limits.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

The center has continued to engage in renovation projects and updates with acquiring the school location and expanding to make use of additional rooms, and installation of the gagaball center of the playground.

The center is participating in the IQ4K program which seeks to implement best practice recommendations and is currently rated a Level 1 program on a 5 level scale where the top rating would be a Level 5.

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

109.4(3)a: Postings are required for:The certificate of license.Notice of exposure to communicable disease.Notice of decision to deny, suspend, or revoke center license or reduce to provisional status.All postings shall be conspicuously placed at main entrance of center.
-- The License Certificate was not posted at the entrance of the church location, and notices need to be moved to the main entry area of the school building location now that the center owns the full building.

109.9(1)b: All files contain:A signed copy of DHS criminal history record check or any other permission form approved by the Department of public Safety for conducting an Iowa or national criminal history check. A copy of Request for Child Abuse Information.Copies of the results of Iowa records checks conducted.Copies of national criminal history check results.Any Department-issued documents sent to the center related to records check.
-- Many of the files were missing documentation of both Iowa SING background checks, and FBI fingerprint background checks at the time of the initial visit. NOTE: Background checks had been obtained by the time of the second visit but several staff had incomplete checks as a Record Check Evaluation was required for a positive record result.

109.9(1)d: All files contain a pre-employment physical exam report completed within six months prior to hire and at least every three years. Physical exams shall be documented on form 470-5152, Child Care Provider Physical Examination Report.
-- Documentation was missing for many staff at the time of the initial visit.

109.9(2): All files are updated at least annually and when a change occurs.
-- Documentation was missing for many of the children who had been enrolled with the center for more than 1 year.

109.9(4): Daily written records are maintained for each child under two years of age and include time periods slept, amount of/time food consumed, time/irregularities of elimination patterns, general disposition, and general summary of activities.
-- Documentation of Daily Activities was not being maintained for each child under 24 months of age as required.

109.10(15)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.
-- Emergency drills were not conducted/documented for the church location for either fire or tornado for the months of May thru December 2024. Evacuation notices were not present by all exits from all programming spaces as required.

109.10(16)a: The center and supervisor shall ensure that staff knows names and number of children assigned. Staff shall provide careful supervision.
-- Children were observed to be sent out of classrooms on their own to transition between locations/activities. One child was left in a classroom alone while using the restroom after staff and peers went to snack and staff not knowing the child was in the restroom.

109.12(4): Sufficient toilet articles are provided for handwashing.Sufficient and safe indoor play equipment, materials, and furniture that conforms with CPSC or ASTM.Play equipment, materials, and furniture meet the developmental, activity, and special needs of the children.Room's arrangement does not obstruct the direct observation of children.Individual covered mats, beds, or cots, and appropriate bedding is provided for all children who nap.Procedures are developed and implemented to maintain equipment and materials in a sanitary manner.Sufficient spacing is maintained between equipment to reduce transmission of disease and allow ease of movement by children and staff to respond to activities and care needs.Sanitary procedures are followed for use and storage of personal hygiene articles.
-- Items and toys with parts that can easily break off which are less than 1 1/4 inches wide and 2 1/4 inches long are considered choking hazards and need to be removed from classrooms serving children under 3 years of age. The fall surfacing of the school location playground has developed a hard pan layer and needs to be aerated. S hooks on swings need to be closed so that there is less than 1mm between the end and the barrel of the hook.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

A full license will remain in effect at this time. Please provide a written response to the licensing consultant identifying a plan of action to correct those aspects cited as not meeting licensing standards and identifying an anticipated date of compliance. At least one visit will be made to the center during the next year.

*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.