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

Name of Center: Little Panther Daycare & Preschool **Enrollment:** 69 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 6500

Street: 601 Panther Dr **City:** Panora Iowa **Zip** 50216 **County:** Guthrie

Mailing Address: PO Box 567, Panora, IA, 50216

Director's Name: Amanda Sparks **Phone Number:** 641-755-3003

On-Site Supervisor(s): Heidi Huitt, Kinze Laabs, Heather Bielenberg **E-Mail:** littlepanther@netins.net

Date(s) of Visit: 08-07-2025

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:** 07-02-2025

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

Date Inspected: 11-20-2023

Comments : State Fire Marshal inspections are due at least every three years.

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	18	20	38	30	106
Summer					0

QRS Rating: 1

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 09-01-2025 to 09-01-2027
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Nate Knepper **Date:** 08-08-2025

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

N/A.

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

A licensing inspection visit was conducted on 8/7/25. The director was present throughout the visit.

All areas of the program were observed. These areas observed consisted of classroom observations and activities, ratios, nutritional practices, health and safety practices, playground observation, field trip and transportation practices, and administrative review.

Little Panther Daycare and Preschool is a childcare program located in Panora, IA. The center serves children ages four weeks old to 12 years in age. School-age children use the gym and cafeteria within the school which is located just up the hill and on the same property as the building were other children in the center are located. There are a total of six classrooms. The center uses a weekly, theme-based curriculum that incorporates several curriculums, including the Creative Learning Curriculum.

The center is overseen by a Board. Amanda Sparks is the new director of this center as of 6/2025. Amanda has past experience and training to meet requirements as director. Heidi Huitt, Kinzee Laabs, and Heather Bielenberg are the on-site supervisors. All three individuals meet the qualifications for on-site supervisors.

During the visit, children were observed in a variety of activities. Some children were playing on the playground. Children had sunscreen applied before going outside. Some children were engaged in free-choice play at the different learning stations in classrooms made available to them. In the infant classroom, children were observed getting ready to eat and were sitting in high chairs. The school-age children were on a field trip at the time of the visit. Children discussed when and how often they washed their hands. Children and staff gave specific answers as to where they relocate to for monthly fire and tornado drills. Staff were engaged with children and all of their activities.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

There is a secure entrance into the center. There are also security cameras.

The center participates in IQ4K which is a voluntary program based on best practice.

The center will provide a certain brand of formula to infants at no additional cost at parents' request.

At least quarterly staff meetings are held.

The center participates in the food program -CACFP. The center employs a full-time cook.

A monthly newsletter is sent to parents via email.

Preschool is open to the public.

Enrollment remains steady.

Staff bios and pictures are posted within the center.

The center has a website and a Facebook page. They also use the online app, Brightwheel.

There is a full basement area for extra storage and for staff and children to go for weather related events.

The new director believes that there is a good mix of tenured and new staff and they all work well together.

The new director appears to be organized and has internal supports in place.

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

109.11(3)a: Center shall ensure that: Facility and premises are sanitary, safe, and hazard free. Sufficient lighting shall be provided. Sufficient ventilation. Sufficient heating. Sufficient cooling. Equipment placed in the program area is maintained so as not to result in injury to the children.
The soap water bottle should be labeled as such.

109.11(4)a: Center must have safe outdoor program area adjacent to the center, with sufficient square footage to accommodate at least 30 percent of the enrollment capacity at any one time at 75 spear feet per child. Outdoor space must: Be free from litter and unsafe materials and free from contamination by the drainage or ponding of sewage or storm water. Include safe play equipment and an area of shade. Include fencing to protect from bodies of water or vehicular traffic.
There are some caps on bolts that were missing along the fence. Bolts should not have more than two threads showing.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

Radon testing was last completed 9/2/22 - 9/6/22. All classrooms came back with radon levels below the 4.0 cutoff. Because levels were below 4.0, the center can move to testing for radon at least every five years now. So long as radon levels remain below 4.0, they can remain on a five year plan. If at the next testing levels in any classroom come back 4.0 or higher, the center will have to have a mitigation plan, retest, and at least temporarily move back to testing every two years.

The annual HVAC inspection was last completed on 11/30/24.

The center transports children to field trips in their bus they purchased in 2022. Regular maintenance is performed on the bus.

I - Power was again discussed at the visit. It appears all staff have I - Power profiles and training is being uploaded.

The CACFP smart phone app was shared with the new director at the visit.

Staff will need to carefully watch fall zones (need minimum of six feet) on the bigger Little Tyke climbing structures in the younger children's playground.

It was noted that on the school-age playground that is also used by the public, that there remains a broken piece of equipment (children are told by staff not to play on this equipment) and their also remains issues with rubber mulch surfacing underneath another climber where the black mesh is exposed which creates a potential hazard.

A hand washing sign should be posted at the shared sink in the school-age cafeteria restroom. A hand washing posting was emailed to the center after the visit concluded.

This consultant's most current posting was emailed after the visit concluded as it is needed in the school-age classroom.

The director should check with one family to make sure all contact information is still current in the child's paperwork.

It is recommended the new director go to the CCR&R website and sign up for Constant Contact so that she is receiving licensing/center/grant/etc. information. CCR&R is a valuable and free resource for all centers.

A new, full, two-year license is recommended.

*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.