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

Name of Center: Hand in Hand-35th Avenue **Enrollment:** 110 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 42652

Street: 3524 35th Ave **City:** Marion Iowa **Zip** 52302 **County:** Linn

Mailing Address: 3524 35th Ave, Marion, IA, 52302

Director's Name: Kathy Kolthoff **Phone Number:** 319-373-3630

On-Site Supervisor(s): Molly Luedeman, Brooke Holub **E-Mail:** hih@handinhandinc.com

Date(s) of Visit: 03-22-2023

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

Date Inspected: 06-08-2020

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 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	13	80	30	149
Summer					0

QRS Rating: 4

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 04-01-2022 to 04-01-2024
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Amy Lyons **Date:** 04-06-2023

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

Not applicable.

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

Hand in Hand operates multiple programs throughout the community and has been in operation for 21 years. Specifically, Hand in Hand - 35th Avenue has been in operation since 2014. Hand in Hand - 35th Avenue is a profit program which operates year-round Monday through Friday 6:30am to 6:00pm. The program serves children age infant through school-age. Hand in Hand - 35th Avenue includes a statewide voluntary 4-year-old preschool program in collaboration with the Linn Mar School District. Current enrollment is 111.

Hand in Hand multi-site owner/director is Kathy Kolthoff. Ms. Kolthoff holds a degree in Early Childhood Education and Business Management. Ms. Kolthoff has achieved the National Administrators Credential (NAC) and is a member of National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Hand in Hand multi-site management personnel includes Ms. Sara Swestka who has been with Hand in Hand for over 20 years. Ms. Swestka holds her Bachelor of Art degree in Elementary Education and Early Childhood Education. Ms. Swestka has many years of experience working with children, continues to participate in much child development related training, and has achieved NAC. Hand in Hand multisite curriculum specialist Katie Simmons has been with Hand in Hand for over 17 years, and specifically, been part of the management team since 2011. Ms. Simmons has an AA degree in early childhood education, has much experience working with children, and continues to participate in child development related training. Hand in Hand multisite school-age coordinator is Katie Little. Ms. Little has been with Hand in Hand since December, 2017. Ms. Little has a BA degree in nursing, an AA degree in marketing management, over 6 years of experience working with children, and continues to participate in much child development related training. Site specific on-site supervisors of Hand in Hand - 35th Avenue are Molly Luedeman and Brooke Holub. Ms. Luedeman has been employed with Hand in Hand for several years, has much experience working with children and continues to participate in much child development related training. Ms. Holub has been an on-site supervisor of Hand in Hand since May 2022. Ms. Holub has over 5 years experience working with children and continue to participate in much child development related training.

On 3/22/2023, program space was observed.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

Hand in Hand offers a variety of early learning/childcare programming options to help meet the needs of children and families in the community.

The year 2023 marks Hand in Hand's 21st year of providing childcare and early learning services to children and their families throughout the community. Congratulations on celebrating 21 years! Specifically, Hand in Hand - 35th Avenue will be in their 9th year of operation during 2023.

The philosophy of Hand in Hand is to "…understand your needs and your child's needs and offer convenient options....that go way beyond after school needs...offers a variety of activities that promote life skills such as teamwork, sportsmanship, creativity, and leadership..."

Hand in Hand has the following website for families and the community to learn more about their programs: http://handinhandinc.com/.

Hand in Hand has a history of participating in quality initiatives including local quality initiatives. The program has achieved 4-Star QRS. Management reported future goals related to IQ4K and PBIS training. In 2022, Hand in Hand received a "Certificate of Appreciation" from the Linn Mar Community School District to certify that Hand in Hand made a significant and important contribution to Linn Mar High School and is held in the highest esteem as a member of their school community.

Founding original owner Ms. Kolthoff is a local entrepreneur invested in the local and surrounding communities. Ownership and management of Hand in Hand has remained consistent. This includes owner Ms. Kolthoff, management personnel Ms. Swestka, curriculum specialist Ms. Simmons, school-age coordinator Ms. Little, and specific on-site supervisors Ms. Luedeman and Ms. Holub. Management is extremely organized, and in turn, the program operates smoothly. Hand in Hand has noteworthy systems of organization in place to help ensure administrative items are completed and maintained as required. Management is knowledgeable of licensing guidelines as well as their own policies and procedures. Management has achieved NAC.

Management team continues to be mentors throughout the community as well as part of an online innovative national director social media group. Hand in Hand management team also continues to be part of a local task force known as "Building Community Childcare Solutions" which examines childcare needs and solutions. In 2021, Hand in Hand management team established an optional monthly employee wellness challenge to help focus on lowering stress and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. In 2022, Hand in Hand undertook the immense task of establishing a company-wide unique online process for staff onboarding, training, and continuous transfer of knowledge. This also lead to an updating of the company's Employee Manual and a new Lead Teacher Manual both of which have become part of the company's online staff onboarding program. In 2023, management has enhanced hiring practices for room lead staff including having new leads rotate shadowing seasoned teachers and hosting semiannual lead staff meetings, (e.g. welcoming idea generation, tapping into specific staff/room expertise, collective linking of resources). Ms. Luedeman discussed how in 2023, Hand in Hand also recently added 3 new sites and already renewed contracts.

Since the last monitoring visit, Hand in Hand - 35th Avenue has retained seasoned staff as well as hired some new staff. Staff throughout the classrooms reported celebrating 5 years, 3 years, 2 years, and 2 weeks months of employment with Hand in Hand. Management supports staff professional goals including WAGE$ program. To help support employees, management has established an annual staff requirements calendar book with necessary forms, materials, and so on as well as a quarterly employee newsletter that includes helpful policy reminders and tips and classroom tools/resources. Management continues to support employees through an accrued point system rewarding staff for their daily dedication, the ability to collaborate among all Hand in Hand sites to share materials, curriculum, joys, challenges, and ideas/planning, and staff incentives (e.g. childcare, snack cart, social media contests, wellness challenges, birthday acknowledgement, teacher appreciation wall, employee of the month). Ms. Luedeman discussed being proud of her highly educated, hard working team of employees.

Hand in Hand - 35th Avenue has emergency plans, policies, and procedures in place which are annually reviewed and updated as needed. Hand in Hand sites have successfully navigated through the 2008 historic Linn County Flood, 2019 winter Polar Vortex, 8/20/20 Derecho Storm event and 2019 health pandemic. In 2023, Hand in Hand began monthly employee safety plan reviews focusing on a series of topics including first-aid, housekeeping, ergonomics, proper lifting, workplace violence, and slips, trips and falls.

Hand in Hand - 35th Avenue continues efforts at optimal communication between the program/staff and families. The program has an organized parent-staff/program information center, offers regular program newsletters, utilizes technological communication resources, and supports family programming activities. Family programming activities include open houses, parent/program conferences, holiday parties, themed events (e.g. upcoming STEM night, National Scribble Day), preschool graduation ceremony, on-site guest events (e.g. Blank Park Zoo, Humane Society, fire department, police department), graduate luncheon, muffins with mom, donuts with dad, and giving back community service projects. Ms. Luedeman talked about how the monthly newsletter has enhanced family focus to include an activity families may enjoy at home to be displayed in the center (e.g. Thanksgiving Turkey craft, winter snowflake creation). Ms. Luedeman acknowledged the positive family feedback they continue to receive.

Building and grounds are well-maintained. The building is currently undergoing a paint refresh. The kitchen is spacious, sanitary and organized. The program cook has been with Hand in Hand since September 2020. The cook talked about her prior culinary experience expressing most joy in being able to cook for children. Since the last review, the cook discussed how she has been posting daily recipes for families to make and enjoy her culinary dishes not only at childcare but at home as well. Classrooms continue to be arranged in a thoughtful manner with learning at the forefront. Children's accomplishments (e.g. artwork, milestone work, Clever St. Patrick's Day inspired shamrock wall display! Very unique experiment work seeing how many shoes can fit inside a T-Rex footprint was displayed!) are displayed throughout the program space. Materials are accessible to children. Staff were observed communicating with children verbally, using

picture cues, and through sign language. Curriculum is inclusive including a combination of teacher inspired ideas and academic based learning strategies (e.g. individualized Handwriting Without Tears, intense kindergarten readiness, Everyday Mathematics, A Little Spot of Emotion and Feeling, new Hand in Hand pilot program "We are safe. We are kind. We are workers."). Curriculum additionally incorporates on-site guest speaker events, themed days, extra outside enrichments (e.g. Kiddy Keys, Dance Academy) and sentimental memory book for families as each child graduates into the next classroom. Curriculum goals include developing a stronger infant and 2yo curriculum as well as training on and implementing new PBIS teachings.

Hand in Hand - 35th Avenue collaborates well with community partners including local school districts, early access persons, CCR&R, local businesses, and health professionals. Hand in Hand - 35th Avenue continues their specific partnership with the Linn Mar School District in order to provide a statewide 4-year-old voluntary classroom. Hand in Hand does provide some transportation to and from their preschool program. Ms. Luedeman talked about how enrollment for the 2023 summer camp is full and enrollment for the 2023-2024 school-year has almost reached capacity. Management discussed utilizing CART and AEA services when needed in partnership with their own new in-house, multi-site curriculum leader Katie Simmons.

The infant room has a “no shoe” policy and was observed supporting safe sleep practices.

Management discussed how each child is engaged in a daily health check upon arrival for early detection of apparent illness, communicable disease, or unusual condition or behavior which may adversely affect the child or the group. Hand in Hand has policies and procedures in place for hand washing, diapering, cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting. Staff were able to verbalize and engage in these processes. Cleaning checklists and daily sanitation reminders were observed to be posted in various areas of the center.

On the day of the monitoring visit, staff were nurturing and attentive to the children's needs. Areas of study throughout the classrooms included weather, bugs, community helpers, space, and spring. Activities throughout the classrooms were many (e.g. infant cares, group discussion, center play experiences, large gross motor activities). After transitioning indoors from outdoor play, staff and children in the 2yo room sang child-friendly songs verbally and with sign language. Stepping into the 3yo room included a noteworthy "out of world experience" with books about space, space themed felt stories, a space rock toss, space themed tracing work, and unique rotation of earth sensory activity! Staff and children in the 4yo room were observed enjoying a game of classroom "hunt the alphabet". The Academy Room was observed to have a new vet-pet center which was being greatly explored by children. Throughout the classrooms, children had access to an array of materials (e.g. books, imaginative play options, sensory items, building materials, journaling, crafts) that encouraged innovative play. Staff provided a companionable presence allowing children to have many choices in their play experiences. Routine transitions (e.g. food service rituals, clean-up activities, Using "A Little Spot of Organization" to clean-up in the Academy Room!) worked smoothly into the program's welcoming and cooperative play environment. Staff were overheard providing children with many words of encouragement, utilizing positive redirection when needed and engaging children in much meaningful discussion. Children were engaged in activities, responded well to staff and appeared to be truly enjoying their day.

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

None noted.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

Consider a future refresh to the infant room sink area.

Continue to store toilet plungers off the floor in non-porous containers.

The program's license remains in full status. Thank you for 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.