Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Elkader Childcare and Learning Center

Provider No.: 19203

Address: 117 Gunder RD, Elkader, IA, 52043

County: Clayton

Director's Name: Calista Morris

On-Site Supervisor: Calista Morris

Phone Number: 5632453333

E-Mail: ecclc03@alpinecom.net

HHS Visit Date: 06/16/2026

Licensing Period: 06/01/2026 to 06/01/2028

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 03/31/2026

Comments:

Report Visit Type:

- [ ] PTO
- [X] Licensing Visit
- [ ] Drop In
- [ ] Administrative Change

License Type:

- [X] Full
- [ ] Provisional

Quality initiative:

- [ ] Accrediation

Program Duration:

- [X] Year-Round
- [ ] School Year
- [ ] Summer Only

Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*
Sunday			
Monday	6:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Tuesday	6:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Wednesday	6:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Thursday	6:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Friday	6:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Saturday			

Program Population Served:

- [X] Infant(0-<24 Months)
- [X] Toddler
- [X] PreSchool
- [X] School Age
- [ ] All Ages

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Aged	Capacity
General	16	21	42	21	100
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

On 06/16/26 I made an unannounced licensing visit to Elkader Childcare and Learning Center. I met with Calista Morris, the director. She started at the center as the director on 05/26/26. Ms. Morris has a BA in early childhood development. Susan Walsh is the assistant director. She is in charge when Ms. Morris is away from the center. There are eleven staff members employed by the center.

The center is in a free-standing building. The program operates Monday through Friday from 6:00 am until 6:00 pm. The center provides care for infants through school-aged children. There are currently 56 children enrolled in the childcare center.

The center operates out of the following rooms: infant room (Orange Room), infant 2 room (one-year-olds-Blue Room), two-year-old room (Yellow Room), three and four-year-old room (Red Room), and school age room (Green Room). The Green Room is the preschool room during the school year. Windows provide natural lighting. The rooms are decorated with pictures of the children, the children's art projects, and posters to assist the children with the learning process, such as the alphabet, shapes, colors and numbers. The children's birthdays were posted. There is an area for circle time.

The centers observed on the day of the licensing visit include library, Lego/blocks, table toys, games, puzzles, transportation, computers, art, Play-Doh, dramatic play, listening, writing, math, science/discovery, woodworking, sensory table and music. Centers were arranged in a manner that allowed easy movement between activities, but it also allowed for clear supervision by staff members. Materials were in good condition. The materials are located at child level, so they are easily accessible to the children.

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

The center is currently using Funnydaffer to create lesson plans. This is a paid lesson plan database that the center will not be renewed after November. Additional resources are used to supplement the lesson plans. Teachers develop their own lesson plans and activities are based on themes. The length of the theme depends on the children's interest level but generally lasts a week. Lesson plans were not available for review in Red or Green Room. Staff members could tell me their plan for the day, but there must be a written lesson plan available for review. Lesson plans are mandated in each of the classrooms.

There was a phone with emergency numbers in the classrooms. You must add the center's address and phone number to the postings. Emergency fire and tornado procedures and evacuation diagrams were posted by the main program doors and outdoor exits throughout the center. A daily schedule was posted in each room.

The center uses the Brightwheel app to complete daily sheets. Brightwheel does not have an area to document the child's mood each day. This is a required area to document for children under the age of two so I would recommend documenting it under "Notes".

There are bathrooms and changing tables throughout the center. Handwashing and diaper changing procedures were posted in all locations.

The center participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The children receive breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack. Meals are prepared on-site. Amie Moser, a volunteer, and Megan Bond, a board member, are currently cooking for the center. The children eat in their rooms. Family style is not being used. A new menu is made each week. Menus are posted on the Brightwheel app. Dishes are washed using an industrial dishwasher. There are also three sinks available to do the three step method. There are two refrigerators and two chest freezers. A thermometer was present in Refrigerator number two. You must add a thermometer in the freezer of Refrigerator number 1. Make sure there are thermometers in both chest freezers as they were full on the day of my visit and could not be located. Food items were stored according to NHSPS guidelines.

In the infant room the parents provide everything until the children start eating table food. There is a small refrigerator for the infant room in the adjoined storage room. A thermometer was present. There is a refrigerator in the Infant 2 room and thermometers were present.

Bottles and dishes are being washed and sanitized in the Orange Room (infants) during the day and sent through the dishwasher at the end of the day.

The center uses bleach and water to sanitize the food tables and disinfect the changing tables.

I observed or discussed diaper changes with the staff members. Proper procedures are followed.

Cribs are used to nap for the infants and mats are used for the older children.

I reviewed documentation of monthly fire and tornado drills. In speaking with staff members, the former director, Jody Krugger, did not practice any fire or tornado drills for approximately one year. Ms. Morris is aware that fire and tornado drills are required every month and they must be documented.

I reviewed documentation of monthly playground inspections. It appears Ms. Krugger did not complete any playground inspections for the last year. Ms. Morris is aware that these are required each month.

The radon test was completed in October 2024 and is good for five years. The results were within the EPA guidelines.

The annual fuel burning inspection could not be located. The last one was done in October 2024. Ms. Morris is aware that an annual fuel burning inspection is due but I advised her to wait until the fall to complete it.

A carbon monoxide detector was present and located in the entrance near the bathroom. Outlets were covered. The fire marshal inspection occurred on 03/31/26.

The parent information is located inside the entrance. The mandatory reporter, childcare consultant and the handbook availability were posted. The license was conspicuously hung. A no-smoking sign was posted at the entrance.

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

There are three separate fenced in areas. The largest area is at the back of the childcare center, and it provides a large grassy area for the children. There are natural hills that provide great entertainment during the winter months with sleds. There is a slide built into the hill. There is also a sandbox, riding toys, balls and a picnic table. There are a gazebo and trees that provide shade. There are benches and a picnic table for the children to rest.

The middle area uses pea gravel for surface cushioning and there is also a grassy area. There are stepping stones and a balance beam. There is also a sandbox, a woodworking center and trucks for the children to play with. Trees provide shade.

The third area is in the front of the childcare center. There are rubber tiles for surface cushioning and a cemented area for riding toys and sidewalk chalk. Helmets are used. There is climbing equipment with a slide and other activities. There are benches available for the children to rest. Trees provide shade and there is also a shade structure.

Staff and children's files were reviewed at the time of the licensing visit. I reviewed eight children files. Files must contain emergency contact information for the doctor and dentist of each child. The doctor's and dentist's name, phone number and complete street address must be provided. One file did not contain emergency doctor or dentist contact information and one file did not provide any doctor emergency contact information. One file did not provide any emergency contacts. There was one missing physical and two outdated physicals. One file did not have permission to seek emergency care. One file did not provide any information on who is allowed to pick the child up. Five files had invalid immunization certificates because they were not signed by medical personnel or dated. Ms. Morris has just started and is just beginning to review children's files to make corrections.

I reviewed two staff files. Two files did not have fingerprint results. Ms. Morris contacted DCI and they informed her they had not received any fingerprints from the center in six months. The new staff members said they went in and had their fingerprints rolled and they had no idea what Ms. Krugger did with them. Local law enforcement was at the center the day of my visit rolling all the staff members' fingerprints.

One staff member had an outdated universal precautions training and she did not have documentation of mandatory reporter training, nor any on-going training in 2025. She also did not have a physical. Ms. Morris states she gave each staff member a list of things they needed to complete by the end of June or she will close rooms.

I reviewed policy and procedures, staff and parent handbooks. The necessary written emergency procedures and policies were present. Ms. Morris states she and the board are in the process of updating handbooks. I spoke with Ms. Morris about working with CCR&R if they are going to update handbooks and they plan to participate in IQ4K. Emergency Preparedness Plans have been completed.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

The day of my visit, the staff members had great interaction with the children. They took the children outside to enjoy the nice weather. They were spread out on the playground to provide careful supervision. In the infant room the staff member was nurturing and attentive. She had great knowledge of licensing standards as a former director. She is a sub but a wonderful asset for the center. In the one year old room the staff were sitting on the floor with the children actively engaged in playing and reading books. They encouraged the children to use their imagination and maintained positive conversation. In the two year old room the children were very active and the staff members were patient and kind as they prepared the children to eat lunch. In the preschool and school age room the classroom made playdough and, in the afternoon, they were going to make a zebra from a t-shirt. The children appeared to enjoy their time at the center.

Ms. Morris is new to the center but she asked great questions and is invested in learning licensing standards and making the necessary improvements. The previous director did not leave the center on good terms and there was missing information, to know fault of Ms. Morris.

Ms. Morris is working with CCR&R. She is open to help and wants to learn Iowa licensing standards. She has experience working in childcare centers out of state.

Ms. Morris states her mother has a degree in behavioral science and she has been visiting the center to help staff members

with behaviors they are seeing in the school age room.

Ms. Morris states the center has a lot of support. She states the board members want to see it thrive and make it a “learning center” more than daycare. They are open to new ideas.

Before Ms. Morris was hired the board was in contact with me and they did a great job of keeping the center afloat. They divided up duties to make sure administrative tasks were completed.

Ms. Morris states since she started the teachers have been stepping up. They have seen that she and Ms. Walsh care and they provide the staff members with breaks.

Ms. Morris states she is big on “messy play”. She is pushing outside play.

Ms. Morris states she is going to send parents a newsletter with changes made at the center.

Ms. Morris states she is going to have staff members start doing assessments on the children.

Ms. Morris states she plans to do IQ4K.

The center is a bus stop for preschool and school age children.

The program is in a secured building.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

109.9(1)a: All files contain:Copy of a department criminal history record check form or any other permission form approved by Department of Public Safety for conducting an Iowa or national criminal history record checkCopy of a request for child abuse information form, when applicable.Copies of results of Iowa record checks conducted through the SING for review by the department upon request.Copies of national criminal history check results.Any department issued documents sent to the center related to a record check, regardless of findings.
Two files did not have fingerprint results. Ms. Morris contacted DCI and they informed her they had not received any fingerprints from the center in six months. The new staff members said they went in and had their fingerprints rolled and they had no idea what Ms. Krugger did with them. Local law enforcement was at the center the day of my visit rolling all the staff members’ fingerprints.

109.9(1)b: 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.
One staff member has been employed since May 2024 and did not have a physical.

109.9(1)c: All files contain documentation to indicate that ongoing staff training requirements are met, including current certifications in first aid/CPR and mandatory child abuse training.
One staff member had an outdated universal precautions training and she did not have documentation of mandatory reporter training, nor any on-going training in 2025.

109.9(2)a-c: All files contain sufficient information to allow the center to contact the parent or emergency contact at any time child is in center’s care as well as who can pick up the child as authorized by the parent.
One file did not provide any emergency contact information, not any names for permission to pick up.

109.9(2)d: All files contain sufficient information and authorization to allow the center to secure emergency medical and dental services at any time child is in center’s care.
One file did not have permission to seek emergency care. Files must contain emergency contact information for the doctor and dentist of each child. The doctor’s and dentist’s name, phone number and complete street address must be provided.
One file did not contain emergency doctor or dentist contact information and one file did not provide any doctor emergency contact information.

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

109.9(2)h: Signed and dated valid Certificate of Immunization, Certificate of Immunization Exemption, or Provisional Certificate of Immunization, provided by the department must be on file for each child enrolled as required by Iowa Administrative Code 641—7.
Five files had invalid immunization certificates because they were not signed by medical personnel or dated.

109.9(2)i: Preschool (for children five years and younger not enrolled in school): Physical exam report submitted within 30 days of admission, was obtained no more than 12 months prior to admission, is signed by a licensed MD, DO, Chiropractor, PA, or ARNP, and contains health history; present health status including allergies, medications, and acute/chronic conditions; and recommendations for continued care if necessary.
There was one missing physical and two outdated physicals.

109.10(13)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.
I reviewed documentation of monthly fire and tornado drills. In speaking with staff members, the former director, Jody Krugger, did not practice any fire or tornado drills for approximately one year. Ms. Morris is aware that fire and tornado drills are required every month and they must be documented.

109.11(4)b: Record of monthly inspections of outdoor recreation area and equipment shall be kept.
I reviewed documentation of monthly playground inspections. It appears Ms. Krugger did not complete any playground inspections for the last year. Ms. Morris is aware that these are required each month.

109.11(6): Telephone: Working phone with posting adjacent for emergency numbers for police, fire, and poison control center. Center street address and phone included in posting.List of emergency numbers for children kept near phone.
Add the center's address and phone number to the emergency posting near all the telephones.

109.12(1): Program structure that uses developmentally appropriate practices and written program of activities planned to the developmental needs of children served.Program complements but does not duplicate school curriculum.Schedule of program is posted in a place visible to parents.
Lesson plans were not available for review in Red or Green Room. Staff members could tell me their plan for the day, but there must be a written lesson plan available for review. Lesson plans are mandated in each of the classrooms.

4. Any corrective action plans, provisional license, and safety plans-steps to get into compliance

N/A

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

A full license is issued. All DHS licensing standards and procedures must be maintained during the renewal period.

While there are several citations, they are the result of the previous director and do not reflect on Ms. Morris who only started at the center on 05/26/26. She has gone through staff files and gave all staff members the information they need to correct immediately. She now plans to review children’s files and update information. She is aware that fire and tornado drills must occur every month and playground inspections must occur every month.

Targeted Assessment: Behavior Management:
I discussed with Ms. Morris her oversight of behavior management related to helping childcare staff: 1) Understand expectations, 2) managing frustrations, 3) monitor performance. Ms. Morris is a new director and states she is still working on this. She is observing staff members to see what they are doing now. Ms. Morris states she is modeling for staff members when she is in the classrooms. She talks with them about not yelling across the room and that they need to go to the child and get down on their level to talk with them. She is touching on using empathy and teaching social-emotional learning.

Ms. Morris states she has not dealt with it much yet. She did have a staff member get frustrated and walk out of the center. She talks with staff members about “tapping out” and taking a break. She tells staff members to message her and she will

step in at any time.

To monitor, she walks through the center frequently and if she hears raised voices, she will check on the situation. She wants to sit down with staff members and talk with them about what they want for solutions.

Date: 06/29/2026

HHS Licensing Consultant: Becky Frost

Non-compliance with any of the mandated regulatory requirements listed above may lead to the cancellation or revocation of your Child Care License. Please take steps necessary to completely address each of the violations noted above.

Child Care Resource and Referral is an excellent resource for providers to access training options and support in your area. You can reach Child Care Resource and Referral at **https://iowaccrr.org**.