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

Name of Center: The Growing Patch Learning Center **Enrollment:** 45 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 48450

Street: 702 Main ST **City:** Center Point Iowa **Zip** 52213 **County:** Linn

Mailing Address: 700 South ST, Urbana, IA, 52345

Director's Name: Jennifer Liedtke **Phone Number:** 319-343-0472

On-Site Supervisor(s): Nicole Hellberg, Jamee Wiebold; Shayla Slager; Stephanie Candler; Vania Kniffen **E-Mail:** growingpatch2017@gmail.com

Date(s) of Visit: 07-10-2025

Licensing Visit X **Unannounced Visit** **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: 02-22-2023

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	18	12	10	7	47
Summer					0

QRS Rating: N/A

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 08-01-2025 to 08-01-2027
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Amy Lyons **Date:** 07-18-2025

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

Not applicable.

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

Growing Patch (GP) operates multiple locations in the community. Specifically, this license is for TGPLC. TGPLC has been in operation since 3/1/2017. TGPLC operates year-round, Monday through Friday from 6:30am to 5:30pm. The program offers childcare to children age infant through school-age. Current enrollment is 45.

Multi-site original founding owner and director is Jennifer Liedtke. Ms. Liedtke has a BS degree in secondary education, has a current State of Iowa teaching license, has over 10 years of experience working with children, and continues to participate in much child development related training. On-site supervisors (OSS) have experience working with children and continue to pursue professional goals including annual child development training.

On 7/10/2025, program space was observed.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

GP programs offer a variety of early learning programming and childcare to help meet the needs of children and families in the community. Their programs are located in predominantly rural areas and accept a variety of funding sources. In March 2025, TGPLC celebrated their 8th year of business. Congratulations!

GP programs sponsor social media pages for those in the community to learn more about their programs.

The mission of GP programs is "…to provide a safe, developmentally appropriate environment for infants, toddlers, preschool and school-aged children….focus is to provide a stimulating early care and educational experience which promotes each child's social/emotional, physical, and cognitive development…our goal is to support each child's desire to be lifelong learners."

GP participates in quality initiatives including QRS and CACFP. GP has historically been recognized for their support of CPU high school students.

Ms. Liedtke is a local entrepreneur invested in children and the community. Ownership and management (e.g. multi-site owner and director Ms. Liedtke, on-site supervisors) of GP programs have remained primarily consistent. GP programs have noteworthy systems of organization in place to help ensure administrative items are completed and maintained as required. In turn, GP programs run smoothly. The management team is also knowledgeable of licensing guidelines as well as their own program's policies and procedures.

Since the last monitoring visit, GP has retained many seasoned staff throughout all their programs. OSS Nicole Hellberg has been with the program since it opened 8 years ago. Congratulations on your longevity and commitment to children! Several staff have or are working towards degrees in early childhood. GP programs continue to support onboarding of new employees within the first 90 days which includes the required trainings as well as training in curriculum, PBIS and CACFP. Documentation reviewed indicates staff professional growth continues to exceed licensing requirements. Ms.

Liedtke talked about how she continues to invest in her employees by encouraging professional goals including participation in TEACH/Wage$, offering flexible scheduling whenever possible, offering competitive wages/benefits, incorporating a training-based pay scale, acknowledging staff successes, and having teacher work/professional development days built into the year.

GP programs have emergency plans, policies, and procedures in place which are annually reviewed and updated as needed. The programs successfully navigated through the 2019 winter Polar Vortex, 2019 health (covid-19) pandemic, 8/10/20 Derecho Storm, 2021 food supply issues, 2022 infant formula shortages, air quality alerts (2023, 2025) and 7/19/24 global technology outage.

The building continues to receive extremely noteworthy replacements and refreshes! New flooring, new cabinets, new countertops, updated paint, new diapering areas, new area washable rugs, new windows, and new materials/furnishings continue to be updated throughout all classrooms. Ms. Liedtke reported future 2025 goals include finishing the final remodeling touches (e.g. toe kick/trim plates, paint). Center kitchen is organized, maintained, and sanitary. During the monitoring visit, kitchen staff reported being the substitute cook who has been able to provide culinary delights to children on and off for a short time.

It was noted that staff cleverly decorated classroom doors in a fun and inviting manner (e.g. "Back for S'More Learning", "It's a Circus in Here")! Classrooms continue to be arranged in a thoughtful manner with learning at the forefront. Children's accomplishments (e.g. artwork, Unique watermelon hallway display! Eye-catching glitter firework crafts!) are displayed in various program areas. Ms. Liedtke acknowledged their full-time curriculum coordinator who holds an early childhood degree and helps teachers plan, implement and carry-out curriculum. Curriculum includes Learning Beyond Paper, teacher inspired ideas, off-site field trip experiences (e.g. local dairy farm, local parks/splash pad), on-site guest speaker events (e.g. annual CPU Children's Theater experience, local librarian, Easter bunny), enrichment activities (e.g. gardening, water days, butter making, butterfly metamorphosis observation), themed days, and holiday/seasonal parties. Since the last review, Ms. Liedtk discussed the immense effort that went into creating and establishing a solid assessment form, child assessment portfolio, and overall assessment process that best aligns with the Iowa Early Learning Standards (e.g. acting photo, assessment and artifact).

GP programs continue efforts at optimal communication between the program/staff and families. The program has organized parent-staff/program information centers, offers regular program newsletters, utilizes technological communication resources, and supports family programming activities.

GP programs continue to collaborate well with community partners including Child Care Resource and Referral, local AEA, local school district, local businesses, city recreational department, and health professionals. Ms. Liedtke discussed their partnership with the local school district that has included some transportation. This program's collaboration with the local library and librarian is also very noteworthy as the local librarian visits the center every other week for further literacy enrichments.

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. This program has policies and procedures in place for hand washing, cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting. 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. Child friendly music was overheard gently playing in some classrooms. Areas of recent study included 4th of July and ice cream. Children had access to an array of materials (e.g. books, imaginative play options, building materials, sensory items, crafts, bubbles outdoors) that encourage innovative play. Activities observed were many (e.g. infant cares, book reading, center play experiences, table craft work). Staff provided a companionable presence allowing children to have many choices in their play experiences. Routine transitions (e.g. cleanup activities) worked smoothly into the program's welcoming and cooperative play environment. Throughout the classrooms, staff were overheard providing children with many words of encouragement, utilizing positive redirection when needed and encouraging the use of social graces. Children 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:

Please ensure lesson plans are updated in all rooms (e.g. Seedlings Room).

There is a gap between the new classroom cabinets and the flooring. Please ensure the toe kick-trim is added to help prevent any possible entrapment incident.

A full license is issued. 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.