Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: NICAO Head Start & EHS-Clear Lake

Provider No.: 33739

Address: 1304 4th Ave South, Clear Lake, IA, 50428

County: Cerro Gordo

Director's Name: Megan Judesh

On-Site Supervisor: Breana Pedelty (HS Lead), Caitlin Carolus (EHS Lead)

Phone Number: 6414941891

E-Mail: mjudisch@NICAO-ONLINE.ORG

HHS Visit Date: 10/22/2026

Licensing Period: 12/01/2026 to 12/01/2028

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 09/24/2024

Comments:

Report Visit Type:

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

License Type:

- [X] Full
- [ ] Provisional

Quality initiative:

Quality Rating: 3

- [ ] Accrediation

Program Duration:

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

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CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*
Sunday			
Monday	8:30 AM to 2:30 PM		
Tuesday	8:30 AM to 2:30 PM		
Wednesday	8:30 AM to 2:30 PM		
Thursday	8:30 AM to 2:30 PM		
Friday	8:30 AM to 2:30 PM		
Saturday			

Program Population Served:

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

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Aged	Capacity
General	14		20		34
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

An unannounced annual visit was made to the Clear Lake Head Start program on 10-22-26 where I met with the lead teachers for both classrooms. Caitlin Carolus is the lead teacher for the Early Head Start (EHS) class . Breanna Pedelty the lead teacher for the Head Start (HS) class. Both are well qualified for the positions they hold based on their education, training, and experience. This program is located in a free standing building in Clear Lake overseen by a board of directors and operated as a non-profit entity. The center provides Head Start programming serving children 3 to 4 years of age. There are currently 11 children enrolled in that class.

The center made a formal Exception To Policy (ETP) request to allow a combine age group of children 12 - 36 months in the EHS class. That request was reviewed by the DHHS policy division and was withdrawn to allow for the request to be addressed in the licensing evaluation. It was agreed that an on-going ETP would be granted to allow children 12 - 18 months to be included in the EHS classroom with no more than 8 children being enrolled in that class at any given time. This is based on the strong educational backgrounds of HS teachers and focus on curriculum, availability of additional assistance of support staff at the center, and limited time frames until those children reach 18 months of age. If the center should seek inclusion of children under 12 months of age an individual request and review would be required for those children with considerations of age, developmental ability of those and other enrolled children, and other individual issues.

The general layout and design of the building and classrooms remains the same as in prior visits. The building makes use of two rooms and a common area used as a dining room for the 4 year old class. There are several bathrooms located in the building including in each classroom and the dining area. There is also a changing station in the Early Head Start classroom for those children that are still toilet training or that have accidents. Each classroom has secondary emergency exits that provide direct egress to the outdoors. All exits were observed to be clear of obstruction and opened freely. Each room has

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

windows along the exterior walls that provide ample natural light, ventilation, and view of the outdoors. Each classroom was observed to be clean and in good repair with no safety concerns noted due to maintenance. The classroom activity centers are created through the use of furnishings, and play structures which are arranged so as not to create any blind areas. Each activity center was stocked with toys and materials that were in good repair and appropriate to the ages of the children present.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

Programming & Interaction:
Both classrooms had a copy of the lesson plan posted. The lesson plan for the 4 year old HS class had a more structured schedule and specific curriculum activities. The EHS classroom also had a well developed curriculum but with a more general focus theme of "Pumpkins" which was clearly present in posted art work, activity center materials, and presented interactions.
Good interactions were observed with all teachers presenting the planned curriculum and attending to the children's needs.
When interacting with the children the teachers maintained a focus on developing learning concepts in group settings, and peer relations during self-directed play.
The center uses a positive behavior support system to reinforce appropriate behavioral options through the use of routines, transition activities, reminders, and redirection.
During the visit there were several minor behavioral conflicts and the teachers maintained a focus on safety, and positive peer relations through guided problem solving.
All of the teachers presented energetic attitudes and used calm positive tones and word choices when speaking to the children.

Health & Safety:
Good handwashing practices were observed with the teachers providing supervision and assistance as needed to ensure that the children washed their hands in an effective manner.
I was not able to observe a diaper change during the time of the visit but the teachers in the EHS classroom were able to identify appropriate procedures that are followed. T
Good cleaning practices were observed during the time of my visit with tables being sanitized before and after meal service.

First aid kits are maintained in each classroom and in the center office and were stocked with items necessary to address most common first aid needs.
Allergy and health response plans were present in classrooms.
The center implements additional health practices such as having the children brush their teeth following meals.

Nutrition:
The center does have a full kitchen and meals are prepared on site.
The center does participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program. Copies of the planned menu were posted and identified a good variety of nutritious meal options.
The kitchen was observed to be clean with no evidence of any insect or rodent infestation. All food items were properly stored for both refrigerated and dry pantry items.
Meals are served family style with the children serving themselves and the teachers providing assistance as needed.
Measured scoops and other serving utensils are provided. Staff also use food service gloves when preparing, handling, and assisting children serving food items.
The teachers do sit and eat with the children to provide assistance and model good eating habits.

Playground:
The center playground is divided into two areas that are enclosed and separated by chain link fencing which was in good repair.
One side has an open grassy area, and paved area, and the other has a climbing structure with fall surfacing. The open grassy and paved area has non-climbing play options such as riding toys, dramatic play, balls, other materials.
The climbing structure is intended for older preschool age children and is not used by the EHS children.
Pea gravel is used for fall surfacing and the depth of material was observed to be insufficient. Breanna stated that they are not using the climbing structures at this time due to the concern of the fall surfacing.
The equipment and materials present were observed to be in good repair.
Shade is provided by the building and trees.

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Administration:
Required notices for No Smoking, Consultant Contact, License Certificate, and Mandatory Abuse Reporting were posted in an area that was readily visible and accessible to parents and visitors. Other required postings for emergency evacuation, emergency numbers, handwashing, diapering procedures, curriculum, daily schedule, and planned menu were also posted as required.
A review of child files found each to contain all required documentation and authorizations.
Staff files are maintained at the central administrative offices for the program and are reviewed separately and annually with that office and any issues identified are addressed at that time.
All inspections logs and certificates were current and available.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

None Cited

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

Use of the climbing structures is being prohibited until sufficient fall surfacing is installed.

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

A full license is recommended at this time. Please provide a written response to the licensing consultant identifying a plan of action to correct and maintain 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.

Date: 10/28/2026

HHS Licensing Consultant: Ray Salsbury

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**.