Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Drake University Head Start-Southridge

Provider No.: 49507

Address: 1111 E Army Post Rd, Des Moines, IA, 50315

County: Polk

Director's Name: Mary Vaske

On-Site Supervisor: Regina Nellis-Becke

Phone Number: 5152711854

E-Mail: mary.vaske@drake.edu

HHS Visit Date: 03/11/2026

Licensing Period: 04/01/2026 to 04/01/2028

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 01/15/2026

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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HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*
Sunday			
Monday	8:00 AM to 2:45 PM		
Tuesday	8:00 AM to 2:45 PM		
Wednesday	8:00 AM to 2:45 PM		
Thursday	8:00 AM to 2:45 PM		
Friday	8:00 AM to 2:45 PM		
Saturday			

Program Population Served:

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

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Aged	Capacity
General		19	105		124
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

Drake University Head Start -Southridge opened on 1/17/2018 in their new location. Mary Vaske is the Director of this program. Mary has a Masters degree in Speech-Language Pathology as well as a Bachelors degree in this same field. Mary also has a CDA in Infant/toddler. Mary had been employed with Drake Head Start for 14 years, prior to becoming the director of this Head Start. Regina Nellis-Becke is the on-site supervisor. Regina has a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education and several years experience in preschool and childcare settings. Both meet qualifications for their positions.

An unannounced visit was completed on today's date. Regina assisted with the visit. All program rooms were observed. Children were observed in their classrooms and on the playground.

The center has six classrooms. There are two toddlers classrooms. These rooms operate on a year round schedule. There are four traditional classrooms for children ages three through five. These classrooms operate on a school year schedule. All classroom rooms were in ratio. The center uses Creative Curriculum Gold. All classrooms had a schedule posted. Classrooms had a current lesson plan. The center uses Creative Curriculum Gold. Classrooms are well furnished with age appropriate furnishings, learning supplies and toys. Interest areas are set up within the classrooms.

The center gets meals and snacks from Des Moines Public Schools. Food is served family-style in the classrooms. Lunch served today was pizza sticks, cole slaw, oranges, milk and water. The kitchen area at the center was organized and clean.

Handwashing posters are hung by sinks. Each classroom has a first aid kit. Tornado/Fire emergency exit plans are posted in all classrooms. Radon was tested in August, 2022; all under 4.0 and testing is not due again for five years. HVAC is professionally inspected/maintained. Carbon monoxide detectors are located in each classroom.

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The playground is enclosed by chain-link fencing. There are four areas in the playground. There are two areas for traditional preschool classes, one for the toddler preschool classes and one outdoor learning area. There are shade structures in place. Surfacing material is poured rubber.

The center doesn't provide transportation or take off site field trips.

Administrative Review: Mandatory postings are in place at the center's entrance and outside classroom entrances.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

Drake Head Start programs offer quality programming for children and necessary resources for families. This center is completely renovated and in a good location for families on a bus line.

The center participates in IQ4K and has a three star rating.

There are two outdoor playground areas for large motor play, divided by ages and enclosed. There is a small indoor area that large motor play could take place as well. There is medium sized play equipment that is aging and the center is wanting

This program focuses not only on the child, but also on the whole family. The program works well with the families and provides resources and support for the family as well as setting up goals with families and getting children ready for kindergarten.

The center has a strong partnership with the school district, as well as with AEA and Early Access.

The center has a family support advocate at the site, as well as a mental health interventionist on staff.

A speech therapist and play therapist can provide services to children while they are at preschool.

The center has a Child Assistance Team that meets once a month.

The center has a lending library for families.

The center has a secure entrance.

The center conducts Dental screening. The nurse conducts an eye exam for each student at the beginning of the school.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

There were no licensing violations cited during today's visit.

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

N/A.

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

The center has a full license.

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Date: 04/09/2026

HHS Licensing Consultant: Melinda Larson, Child Care Licensing Consultant

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**.