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

Name of Center: Spring Ahead Learning Center **Enrollment:** 38 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 18223

Street: 215 Clark ST **City:** Lime Springs Iowa **Zip** 52155 **County:** Howard

Mailing Address: PO Box 72, Lime Springs, IA, 52155

Director's Name: Sonda Stephens **Phone Number:** 563-566-8058

On-Site Supervisor(s): Sonda Stephens **E-Mail:** springaheadlc@hotmail.com

Date(s) of Visit: 03-24-2025

X **Licensing Visit** X **Unannounced Visit** **Off Year Visit** **Administrative Change**

LICENSING VISITS

New Application X **Re-Application** **NA**

Signed Application (470-0722) Received X **Yes** **No** **NA** **Date Signed:** 02-10-2025

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

Date Inspected: 10-14-2024

Comments : Compliance on 11/17/21

LICENSE TYPE: X **Child Care** **Preschool (ages 3-5 meets three hours or less per day)**

Financial Type: Profit X 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	12	12	16	20	60
Summer					0

QRS Rating: N/A

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 04-01-2025 to 04-01-2027
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Becky Frost **Date:** 03-25-2025

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

N/A

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

On 03/24/25 I made an unannounced licensing visit to Spring Ahead Learning Center in Lime Springs. I met with Sonda Stephens, the director of the program. Ms. Stephens was hired as the director in September 2024. She was previously employed at this center and was the on-site supervisor for three years. She has an AA in criminal justice, a BA in corrections and one year in business administration. The center employs eight staff members.

The program is in a free-standing building. The program opened on 02/04/13. The center serves infants through school-aged children and operates Monday through Friday from 5:00 am until 6:00 pm. There are currently 38 children enrolled in the center.

The center operates out of the following classrooms, Cuddles (infants, birth until 18 months), Tumblers (18 months through two-years-old), Explorers (three through five-year-olds) and a preschool and school-aged room. An inspection of each room was completed.

Windows provide natural lighting. The rooms are decorated with 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, play dough, art, dramatic play, 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 were easily accessible to the children.

The program uses a variety of resources to create lesson plans. The preschool class uses the Creative Curriculum and completes assessments on the children. Activities are developed around weekly themes. A lesson plan was available for review in every room. There is an Epson projection board in the preschool room.

There was a phone with emergency numbers in the classrooms. The posting included the poison control number and the center's address and phone number. 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 for each room.

I reviewed documentation of monthly fire and tornado drills. I reviewed documentation of monthly playground inspections. A radon test was completed in July 2023. Results were within EPA guidelines.

The fuel burning inspection was not completed and/or could not be located. The center uses propane gas and the appliances that use the propane need to be inspected each year. The center did have an inspection of the boiler and they have contacted a business to make the corrections. A carbon monoxide detector was on site in the Explorers room. Outlets were protected. The fire marshal inspection occurred on 10/14/24.

The program is using the Brightwheel App to complete daily sheets for children under the age of two. They also use the app to keep parents informed of all the enrolled children's activities.

Cribs are used to nap for the infants and then children transition to mats. Mats are stored correctly.

The program does participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The program provides breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack. Staff members rotate turns cooking for the program. All staff members have taken the food training through CACFP. The program is using a monthly rotation of menus. Changes to the menu were noted. Menus and allergies were posted. The program serves the children their food dished out. Family style is not used.

I observed the kitchen to be clean and organized. There is a dishwasher and two small sinks available in the kitchen to wash dishes. There is an industrial refrigerator and an upright freezer and thermometers were present. Food items were stored according to NHSPS guidelines.

In the infant room the parents provide the formula and the center provides baby food and cereal. Bottles are washed in the room using the three-step method. There is a refrigerator in the infant room and a thermometer was present.

The center uses bleach and water to sanitize the food tables and disinfect the changing tables. Bleach bottles are clearly labeled. I discussed diaper changes in the infant room and Tumbler room. Proper procedures are followed. Handwashing procedures were posted near all the sinks and diaper changing procedures were posted near all the diaper changing tables.

The parent information is located on a bulletin board 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.

The center has three playground areas. The school-age children have a partially fenced in large space behind the center. Rubber tiles are used for surface cushioning. There is also a concrete area with basketball hoops and a grassy area. There is climbing equipment with slides and other activities. There are swings and a balance beam. There is a rope climbing piece of equipment. Trees are available for shade.

In the front of the center are two fenced in playground areas. There is an aera of the fence that is bent and Ms. Stephens has a plan to correct this. One is used for children two and older and one is for infants/toddlers. Rubber tiles are used for surface cushioning. Slides and playhouses are in both areas. There are small riding toys and a tree house in the infant/toddler area. In the other area there is a small climbing wall, sensory table, music center, teeter totter and basketball hoop. There is bench and picnic tables for children to rest and trees are available in both areas for shade.

Staff and children files were reviewed at the time of the licensing visit. I reviewed six children files. Files must contain emergency contact information for the doctor and dentist of each child. The doctor and dentist's name, phone number and complete street address must be provided. Two files did not provide any dental emergency contact information. There was one outdated physical.

I reviewed two staff files. They were in good condition. One staff member had a recently outdated universal precautions training. This will not be cited.

I reviewed policy and procedures, staff and parent handbooks. The necessary written emergency procedures and policies were present. Emergency Preparedness Plans have been completed.

There was child friendly music playing in each of the rooms. Staff members interacted with the children at their level, whether that be on the floor or sitting at a table with them. They maintained positive conversation with the children and used positive redirection when necessary. They provided the children with praise. They encouraged the children to use their imaginations during play. They removed toys that the children placed in their mouths so they could be sanitized. They were great at multi-tasking. The children appeared to enjoy their time at the program.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

Ms. Stephens states she has a good team of co-workers. She states she had a few strong staff members when she started and now, they are building their team up. They want to work more hours and they step in where they are needed.

Ms. Stephens states the center is a bus stop for Howard Winneshiek School district.

Ms. Stephens is a great fit as the director for this center. She has previously worked at the center and was an on-site

supervisor. She has a great working relationship with the staff members. She is not afraid to make hard decisions. She wants to do what is best for the center and the children.

In the three-year-old preschool class the teachers do assessment portfolios on the children. And they use these assessments when they have conferences in November and May.

Ms. Stephens states she is increasing the enrollment.

The center hallway is decorated with the children's art and pictures of the children which makes it an inviting environment. There are pictures of the staff members in the entrance.

Staff and children files were organized and easy to review.

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

109.9(2)b: 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.
Number not in compliance for dental: 2
Information lacking: Files must contain emergency contact information for the doctor and dentist of each child. The doctor and dentist's name, phone number and complete street address must be provided. Two files did not provide any dental emergency contact information.

109.10(1)a: 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, PA, Chiropractor or ARNP, and contains health history; present health status including allergies, medications, and acute/chronic conditions; and recommendations for continued care if necessary.
Number not in compliance: 1
There was one outdated physical.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

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

*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.