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

Name of Center: Downtown Cedar Rapids KinderCare **Enrollment:** 140 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 51966

Street: 615 1st AVE SE **City:** Cedar Rapids Iowa **Zip** 52401 **County:** Linn

Mailing Address: 615 1st AVE SE, Cedar Rapids, IA, 52401

Director's Name: Sara Schwerin **Phone Number:** 319-362-0207

On-Site Supervisor(s): Sarah Peters, Lauren Speth, Marilene Cecilio Januario **E-Mail:** SSchwerin@kindercare.com shenry@kindercare.com

Date(s) of Visit: 01-20-2023

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

LICENSING VISITS

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

Signed Application (470-0722) Received X **Yes** **No** **NA** **Date Signed:** 08-26-2022

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

Date Inspected: 08-31-2022

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 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	74	28	103		205
Summer					0

QRS Rating: N/A

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 02-01-2022 to 02-01-2027
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Amy Lyons **Date:** 02-02-2023

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

Not applicable. This is a new program which completed an Application to Operate on 8/26/2022 and commenced programming on 10/29/2022.

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

Downtown Cedar Rapids KinderCare (new current license #51966) was established after new ownership acquired The Cedar Rapids Day School (former license #45980). Downtown Cedar Rapids KinderCare completed an Application to Operate on 8/26/2022. The Cedar Rapids Day School's last day of operations was 10/28/2022. The Downtown Cedar Rapids KinderCare's first day of operations was 10/29/2022. Downtown Cedar Rapids KinderCare operates year-round, Monday through Friday 6:45am to 5:30pm. The program serves child age birth through preschool-age. Current enrollment is 140.

Multi-site director is Sara Schwerin. Ms. Schwerin is the multi-site director of Downtown Cedar Rapids KinderCare and Hiawatha KinderCare. Ms. Schwerin had been the director of KinderCare West #291 prior to her transfer to multi-site director of these two locations. Ms. Schwerin has been with KinderCare since 2001 and a KinderCare director for over 16 years. Ms. Schwerin has a BA degree in Elementary Education/Middle School with an childhood education endorsement. Ms. Schwerin has a valid Iowa teaching license. Ms. Schwerin has much experience working with children (including being a past lead teacher for the program's statewide 4-year-old voluntary preschool classroom) and continues a goal-oriented professional growth plan. On-site supervisor Sarah Peters has a BA degree in elementary education, over 15 years experience working in childcare, and continues to participate in much child development related training. On-site supervisor Marilene Cecilio Januario has a BA degree in education counseling, over 19 years experience working in childcare, and continues to participate in much child development related training. On-sit supervisor Lauren Speth has over 6 years experience working in childcare and continues to participate in much child development related training.

On 1/20/23, program space was observed.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

Downtown Cedar Rapids KinderCare is located in a predominantly urban neighborhood. The profit program provides a variety of full-time and part-time learning opportunities as well as accepts many different of funding sources to help meet the needs of children and families throughout the community.

Downtown Cedar Rapids KinderCare has established the following website for families and the community to learn more about the program:
https://www.kindercare.com/our-centers/cedar-rapids/ia/302059.

The mission of this KinderCare is "…to provide programs and environments that enrich children's development, promote respect for children, and celebrate the joy of childhood".
KinderCare programs have a history of participating in quality initiatives including national accreditation, CACFP, QRS/IQ4K, and local quality initiatives. Ms. Schwerin discussed future goals of continued participation in quality initiatives including IQ4K, CACFP and TEACH/WAGE$.

Downtown Cedar Rapids KinderCare is now part of the national KinderCare Education enterprise. KinderCare Learning Centers were founded in 1969 and have continued to provide childcare programming for over 50 years. KLC provides educational programs for children from six weeks to 12 years old. These nationwide educational programs include over 1,000 early childhood education community centers, over 500 before-and-after school programs, and over 100 employer sponsored centers in 38 states and the District of Columbia. KinderCare Education enrolls approximately 200,000 children and employs approximately 30,000 people nationwide.

Ms. Schwerin has been with KinderCare since 2001 and full-filled a director role for over 16 of those years. Congratulations on celebrating 22 years! Ms. Schwerin recently moved into a multi-site director role helping two newly acquired facilities understand the KinderCare program. Ms. Schwerin is an early childhood mentor/educator in the community. Ms. Schwerin continues to holds seats on both the East Central NAEYC board and the Iowa NAEYC governing board. Ms. Schwerin is organized and has brought her organizational skills with her to these two new programs. The entire management team (e.g. Ms. Schwerin, Ms. Peters, Ms. Speth, Ms. Cecilio Januario) have quickly developed noteworthy systems of organization to help ensure administrative items are completed as required and maintained in a confidential manner. As a result, the program experiences smooth daily operations. The management team is knowledgeable of licensing guidelines with continued growth in understanding of KinderCare's policies and procedures. Ms. Schwerin discussed the collaboration that is done among local as well as national KinderCare sites that allows for a sharing of materials, curriculum, ideas/planning, and professional growth training. Ms. Schwerin talked about how she has been working hard to get to know their new facilities, team of staff and families.

Since the acquisition, Downtown Cedar Rapids KinderCare retained several staff from the previous ownership as well as hired some new ones. Ms. Schwerin talked about goals related to IQ4K, professional development, and participation in the TEACH/Childcare WAGES Iowa. Ms. Schwerin discussed how KinderCare made 2022 the "Year of the Teacher" with KinderCare offering more training opportunities, new retention incentives, additional teacher appreciation/acknowledgment, continued family/staff referral/incentive program, continued no cost staff educational development, and the continued partnership with the TEACH program.

Downtown Cedar Rapids KinderCare has emergency plans, policies, and procedures in place which are annually reviewed and updated as needed. The local KinderCare programs have successfully navigated through the 2008 historic Linn County flood, the 2019 Derecho Storm event, and the 2019 pandemic.

Downtown Cedar Rapids KinderCare continues to build communication between their new program/staff and families. KinderCare historically provides parent-staff/program information centers, offers regular program newsletters, utilizes technological communication resources (e.g. unique "Grow Me App", quarterly noon "Coffee Chat"), and supports family programming activities. KinderCare also historically offers family events throughout the year including open houses, parent/program conferences, access to family ambassadors, and program/parent "Care Calls". Ms. Schwerin discussed recent family on-site events including family breakfast, flat bread pizzas to go, and pick-up time popcorn/puffcorn. Ms. Schwerin talked about an upcoming Saturday Valentine's Dance that will be held with families where everyone dresses up and does an old-fashioned exchange of Valentines.

To help ensure the building remains sanitary and hazard free each day, KinderCare has maintenance persons (e.g. indoor and outdoor) who assists in maintaining the property. Since acquiring the facility, an employee breakroom was established acknowledging "shot-outs" to celebrate staff successes, increased opportunities to improve overall center/work culture (e.g. after work bowling, Ronald McDonald House give back of meals and books, holiday collection and donation of toys) have been happening, menu changes with increased offerings continue to occur, an on-site parent feeding room was made functional and a curriculum room re-established. Ms. Schwerin discussed how continued exciting updates (e.g. a complete "building refresh", possible partnership with local school district, outdoor play area enhancements) are coming as the property fully transitions to KinderCare. Ms. Schwerin talked about a recent family survey that resulted in many positive comments about increased program/family communication as well as new on-site family events. Ms. Schwerin discussed how family surveys also supported the need for KinderCare to increase outdoor lighting.

Downtown Cedar Rapids KinderCare collaborates well with community partners including the local school districts, early access persons, local businesses, CCR&R, other childcare programs/directors, NAEYC administration and health professionals. Ms. Sherwin talked about a future goal of child immunization review with the local nurse consultant.

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. Staff were observed engaged in handwashing and encouraging child handwashing. The program has policies and procedures in place for cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing. Cleaning supplies as well as cleaning checklists/reminders were observed in various areas on-site.

On the day of the monitoring visit, staff were nurturing and attentive to the children's needs. Areas of study included polar animals. Activities observed were many (e.g. infant cares, center play, circle discussion with book reading). A very unique and noteworthy "Dunkin Donuts" hot chocolate/coffee shop experience was happening in an older classroom. Children have

access to an array of materials (e.g. books, imaginative play options, building materials, games, puzzles, sensory, crafts) that encourage innovative play. Staff provided a companionable presence allowing children to have many choices in their play experiences. Routine transitions (e.g. clean up activities, food service rituals) worked smoothly into the program's welcoming and cooperative play environment. Throughout the classrooms, staff were overheard providing children with many words of encouragement and engaging children in much meaningful discussion. 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:

Given the recent acquisition, prompt changes already made, and upcoming "building refresh", much leeway is being granted as the building and program structure continues the transition to the KinderCare way. On 1/20/23, licensing and Ms.Schwerin discussed corrections that have already been made as well as continued upcoming corrections (e.g. removal the half moon infant/toddler feeding tables, removal of curtains, replacement/stand alone diaper station in young 2yo room, adding hooks/storage for staff personal items).

If cots are stored in hallways, ensure fire code continues to be met. Please also obtain a cot cover designed specifically to cover multiple stacked cots.

Consider installing dutch-doors to the classrooms' enclosed child restroom areas which will allow for better supervision as well as continued privacy. Also, consider adding a dutch-door to the young toddler's enclosed kitchenette. Again, this will allow better supervision.

Consider installing covex security mirrors in various areas of the child rooms and center hallways to help prevent problematic supervision.

Licensing strongly recommends a dishwasher be installed in the infant areas (including young toddler kitchenette area). If these items were available, infant room staff would have more time to dedicate to individual infant cares and nurturance.

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.