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

Name of Center: Lil Comets Childcare **Enrollment:** 37 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 52077

Street: 201 N Wilhelm ST **City:** Conrad Iowa **Zip** 50621 **County:** Grundy

Mailing Address: PO Box 455, Conrad, IA, 50621

Director's Name: Penny Switzer **Phone Number:** 641-366-3041

On-Site Supervisor(s): Erin Cross (owner) **E-Mail:** lilcometschildcare@gmail.com

Date(s) of Visit: 03-29-2024, 04-03-2024

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

LICENSING VISITS

New Application X **Re-Application** **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: 05-31-2022

Comments : The approved inspection was issued under the previous ownership of the center however confirmation was received from the fire marshal that given there was no change in the functional use of the building, no construction/renovation, and no change in the room occupancies of the center that the prior certificate of inspection would remain valid for the change of ownership.

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	14	12	17	11	54
Summer					0

QRS Rating: N/A

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 11-29-2022 to 04-01-2025
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Raymond Salsbury **Date:** 04-05-2024

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

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

An unannounced licensing visit was made to the center on 03-29-24, and again on 04-03-24 where I met with the center owner Erin Cross. Penny Switzer is the center director and is well qualified for the position based on her experience and training. The program is located in a free standing building in Conrad that was designed as a daycare. The center provides full range programming for infants through school age children. There are currently 37 children enrolled in the center served by 12 staff. All aspects of the program subject to licensing standards were reviewed.

The general layout and design of the center remains the same as in prior visits. The center has 4 primary classrooms established by age groups for infants, 2 year olds, preschool, and school age children. There is also a large central corridor area which had been used for additional programming space in the past and could be used for summer over-flow programming for school age children if needed. Each classroom has secondary exits providing direct access to the outdoors. All designated emergency exits were maintained so that they are clear of obstruction, and opened easily and freely. Each room has windows along the exterior walls that provide ample natural light, a view of the outdoors, and ventilation. Each room has sinks available in the classroom to facilitate hand washing. Pass through restrooms are located between the infant and preschool rooms, and the toddler and school age rooms with direct access from each room. Each restroom has two toilets present. A third restroom is located off the central corridor area. Each room has additional sinks present in the room to facilitate hand washing. The infant room does have a changing station present which is separated from the rest of the room through the use of a mobile fence and gate structure. Each room has an open floor plan design that does not create any blind areas. The preschool room has an elevated play area above low cabinets where cots are stored. There were some minor maintenance issues noted during the visit but nothing that rose to the level of a safety concern. There was an electrician present on the day of the first visit performing maintenance. Each room is divided into activity centers through the use of shelving, play structures, and furniture. The equipment was arranged so as not to create any blind areas.

Activity centers include options such as large/small manipulatives, art/crafts, and reading in each classroom with additional options of dramatic play, group learning, and table games for older age groups. The materials that were present were generally appropriate to the ages of the children in the room, but there were some items with small parts in the two year old classroom. Items that are smaller than, or have parts that can break off which are less than 1 1/4 inches in diameter and 2 1/4 inches in length are considered choking hazards and need to be removed from classrooms with children under 3 years of age. A copy of the daily schedule and planned curriculum was posted in each classroom. A general center wide curriculum theme is used with each classroom then developing their own specific curriculum plan. There were no children present on the day of my first visit, but they were present on the day of the second visit. Ratio was maintained as required by age group. The younger children were napping during the visit, and the preschool children were finishing lunch and preparing for nap time. Good interactions were observed with the teachers attending to the children's needs, or engaging in other activities such as cleaning.

The center does have established health and safety policies but some practices need to be reviewed. Good handwashing practices were observed during the visit. I was able to observe a diaper change and established procedures were generally followed however the teacher did treat the station with chemical cleaners while holding the child. While the child was held so that they were not in the direct line of spray children should have their hands washed and returned to and area where they

are removed from the immediate area where staff are using chemical cleaners. Each classroom maintains a first aid kit which were stocked with materials to address most common first aid needs. In addition to first aid kits maintained in classrooms the center does have a large stocked kit and additional supplies. Purses, chemical cleaners, and other items that can pose a safety risk to children were stored in areas where they are not accessible to children. Medications were properly labeled and stored. Safe Sleep practices were followed for children under 1 year of age however two children in the infant room that were over 1 year of age were observed to be sleeping directly on the floor. It was reviewed that children must be moved to a crib, cot, or sleeping mat as appropriate to the age of the child if children fall asleep while being held, on the floor, or in a piece of equipment. Even with this direction one child was left to sleep on the floor for an extended period of time despite staff having a reasonable opportunity to move the child until specific direction was provided that the child needed to be moved before staff attended to other activities.

The center has a full kitchen and meals are prepared on-site. A copy of the menu was posted and contained a good variety of items that meet nutritional guidelines for CACFP requirements. Good food storage practices were observed with thermometers in refrigerators, however the thermometer in the infant room refrigerator showed a temperature of more than 45 deg. F. on the day of the first visit when the unit would have been largely undisturbed. The maximum allowable temperature for safe food storage of items requiring refrigeration is 42 deg. F. The thermometer may have been bad and needed to be replaced but it was also noted that a temperature log was not being maintained and doing so would help to identify if temperatures are remaining within acceptable limits. packages that had been opened placed in air tight sealable food grade containers. Meals are served in classrooms and while I was not able to observe a meal service on the day of the visit prior reports note that the staff use food service gloves and measured serving utensils when portioning meals for the children. Supervision was provided at the tables.

The center playground is fully fenced and divided into two areas by additional fencing to define a side for toddlers, and a side for preschool and school age children. The toddler playground area contains open grassy areas, a paved riding track, climbing equipment, and other play items. Rubber mulch is used for fall surfacing beneath climbing structures. There were a couple small residential grade slides that were not placed over fall surfacing and these need to be moved to an area with appropriate fall surfacing, or removed from the playground. Erin did note that the children have not been using that area due to weather. The school age playground area makes use of rubber mulch, and foam tiles for fall surfacing beneath different structures. It was noted that the foam tiles are curling and separating at the edges indicating that they are nearing the end of their useful life and the center will need to consider replacement options. In addition to the climbing structures other toys and equipment were present. Shade structures have been built over play areas in both playgrounds. The edges of the pavement has been painted to clearly delineate the transition points. Prior reports for the facility note that the toddler playground has bucket swings with insufficient use/fall zones with the back swing of the unit and it was reviewed that when using the structure staff would need to be positioned behind the swings to prevent children from exceeding the use zone limits. Erin stated that these are not being used and it was noted that the swings did appear to be tied up.

In reviewing administrative records all required notices were posted in an area readily accessible to parents and visitors. A random selection of child and staff files were reviewed and compared to the self-audits completed by the center which were found to be accurate. With regard to child files the self-audit identified that 5 needed an updated physical. The center did not have a self-audit of employee files and a random selection of 25% of the files were reviewed and all were found to contain all required documentation. All inspection logs and certificates were available and current.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

The center has been completing work to update and upgrade the facilities such as the work that was observed to change light fixtures on the day of the first visit. Erin reported that other work is planned including installation of new windows and exit doors this summer, as well as plans to remove the loft area of the preschool classroom and replace it with cabinetry for cot storage.

The center has also seen very stable numbers for child enrollment and staffing.

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

109.11(3)a: Center shall ensure that: Facility and premises are sanitary, safe, and hazard free. Adequate indoor and outdoor space is provided. The outdoor area shall include safe play equipment and area of shade. Sufficient space provided for dining. Sufficient lighting shall be provided. Sufficient ventilation. Sufficient heating. sufficient cooling. Sufficient bathroom and diapering facilities. Equipment, including kitchen appliances, are maintained so as not to result in burns, shock, or injury to children. Sanitation and safety procedures for the center are developed and implemented to reduce risk or injury or harm to children and reduce transmission of disease.
-- The outdoor playground needs to move all climbing structures to areas with sufficient fall surfacing and fall zones as required by the CPSC Public Playground Safety Handbook (https://www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/325.pdf). When using chemical cleaners staff need to remove children from the immediate area to reduce the risk of accidental exposure.

109.12(4): Sufficient toilet articles are provided for handwashing.Sufficient and safe indoor play equipment, materials, and furniture that conforms with CPSC or ASTM.Play equipment, materials, and furniture meet the developmental, activity, and special needs of the children.Room's arrangement does not obstruct the direct observation of children.Individual covered mats, beds, or cots, and appropriate bedding is provided for all children who nap.Procedures are developed and implemented to maintain equipment and materials in a sanitary manner.Sufficient spacing is maintained between equipment to reduce transmission of disease and allow ease of movement by children and staff to respond to activities and care needs.Sanitary procedures are followed for use and storage of personal hygiene articles.
-- Children were observed to be sleeping directly on the floor. Toys with parts, or which are less than 1 1/4 inches in diameter, and 2 1/4 inches in length are considered choking hazards and need to be removed from classrooms of children under 3 years of age.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

A full license will remain in effect 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.

*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.