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

Name of Center: Downtown Cedar Rapids KinderCare **Enrollment:** 200 **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: 01-08-2024

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

LICENSING VISITS

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

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

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	94	36	60	10	200
Summer					0

QRS Rating: N/A

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 02-01-2024 to 02-01-2026
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Amy Lyons **Date:** 01-16-2024

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 is part of the national KinderCare Education enterprise. KinderCare Learning Centers were founded in 1969 and have continued to provide childcare programming for over 53 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. This report pertains specifically to Downtown Cedar Rapids KinderCare which commenced operations on 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 200.

Director Sara Schwerin has been with KinderCare since 2001 and a KinderCare director for over 17 years. Ms. Schwerin became director of the Downtown Cedar Rapids KinderCare when it opened October 2022. 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 16 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 20 years experience working in childcare, and continues to participate in much child development related training. On-site supervisor Lauren Speth has over 7 years experience working in childcare and continues to participate in much child development related training.

On 1/8/2024, 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 national accreditation and IQ4K.

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 17 of those years. Congratulations on celebrating 23 years! 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. The management team (e.g. Ms. Schwerin, Ms. Peters, Ms. Speth, Ms. Cecilio Januario) is organized and has developed noteworthy systems of organization to help ensure administrative items are completed as required and maintained in a secure manner. The management team is knowledgeable of licensing guidelines as well as their own program's policies and procedures. As a result, the program experiences smooth daily operations. 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.

Since the acquisition and last monitoring visit, the program has retained as well as hired some new staff. Staff reported celebrating 7 years, 3 years, and one year of employment at this location. The cook has been with them since summer 2023. Management discussed how KLC has provided their program with a specific recruiter to help with staffing needs. KLC uses a group chat App for staff and management teams to "Shout Out" to one another by sharing successes and unique programming ideas with one another. KLC continues to increase and/or offer training opportunities, retention incentives, teacher appreciation/acknowledgment, family/staff referral/incentives, continued no cost staff educational development, and the continued partnerships with the TEACH and WAGE$ programs. Ms. Schwerin reported 5 staff are currently pursing a CDA. Management also talked about how many staff utilize the new staff break/resource room. Ms. Schwerin discussed how this has been a growth period for all staff and those within the leadership team.

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 2008 historic Linn County flood, 2019 winter Polar Vortex, 2019 health (COVID-19) pandemic, 8/10/2020 Derecho Storm event, and 2023 compromised air quality days.

Downtown Cedar Rapids KinderCare continues efforts at optimal communication between the program/staff and families. The program has organized parent-staff/program information centers, offers regular program newsletters, utilizes technological communication resources (e.g. unique "Grow Me App"), and supports family programming activities. The program does offer family events throughout the year including open houses, parent/program conferences, access to family ambassadors, and program/parent "Care Calls".

Building and grounds are maintained. Outdoor signage has been updated. To help ensure the building remains sanitary and hazard free each day, KinderCare has maintenance persons (e.g. indoor and outdoor) who assist in maintaining the property. The vestibule area includes family/community resource information and sponsors a regular coffee bar (e.g. hot chocolate, snacks). Since the last review, the program space received a complete refresh (e.g. all new furnishings, window treatments, door pinch guards, carpets, kitchen items, first-aid kits, internal program communication devices) as well as many new materials (e.g. books, dramatic play centers, sensory stations). Classrooms continue to be arranged in a thoughtful manner with learning at the forefront. Children's accomplishments (e.g. artwork) are displayed throughout the program space. Materials are accessible to children. Curriculum includes a combination of learning strategies incorporating KinderCare's unique curriculum, teacher created ideas, social emotional learning, early academics, and physical activity to nurture healthy bodies, happy hearts, and growing minds. Curriculum also incorporates on-site guest speaker events, themed days, seasonal parties and enrichments (e.g. cooking, STEM, music, phonics). Communication between children and staff is done verbally, with picture cues, and through sign language. Ms. Schwerin discussed future goals related to adding cushion/padding to cement pillars throughout the classrooms/building and installing gates in some building areas.

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.

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. The program has policies and procedures in place for hand washing, cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting. Staff were able to verbalize and engage in these processes. Cleaning checklists and daily sanitation reminders were observed to be posted in various areas of the center.

On the day of the monitoring visit, staff were observed to be nurturing and attentive to the children's needs. Activities observed included infant cares, center play experiences, small group work and routine transitions. Staff were overheard

providing children with words of encouragement and engaging children in discussion. Children responded well to staff and appeared to be enjoying their day.

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

None noted.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

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 additional convex security mirrors in various areas of the child rooms and center hallways to help prevent problematic supervision (e.g. lower level hallway, large gross motor room).

Licensing strongly recommends a dishwasher be installed in each infant area (including young toddler kitchenette area) and an additional dishwasher be installed in the kitchen. If these items were available, infant room staff would have more time to dedicate to individual infant cares and food service personnel would have additional time to dedicate to food preparation.

Please note - The center meets rule 109.11(3)c in that they are located in a densely developed area. Licensing received and reviewed a written plan (which has been added to the program's record) to not only use the on-site outdoor, courtyard play area but the nearby city park known as Green Square Park. As a result, total capacity is 200.

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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.