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

Name of Center: ExCel Learning Center Daycare **Enrollment:** 28 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 52279

Street: 143 29th AVE SW **City:** Cedar Rapids Iowa **Zip** 52404 **County:** Linn

Mailing Address: 143 29th AVE SW, Cedar Rapids, IA, 52404

Director's Name: Darcel Pledge **Phone Number:** 319-774-6925

On-Site Supervisor(s): Lacretia Pledge **E-Mail:** darcel@exceldaycare.com

Date(s) of Visit: 12-04-2023

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:** 08-11-2023

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

Date Inspected: 07-10-2023

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	18	22	30	28	98
Summer					0

QRS Rating: N/A

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 08-23-2023 to 08-23-2025
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Amy Lyons **Date:** 12-12-2023

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

Not applicable. This is a new program which received Permission to Open (PTO) on 8/23/2023 for 120 days pending a full license inspection.

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

ExCeL Learning Center Daycare commenced operations on 8/23/2023. The program provides childcare to children age infant through school-age. Current enrollment is 28.

Owner and director Darcel Pledge has a MA degree in performance technology training, MS degree in educational leadership and a BA degree in elementary education. Ms. Pledge has several years teaching experience, is a two-time author, is a community education mentor and continues to participate in much child development related training. On-site supervisor Lacretia Pledge has a BA in social work, over 5 years experience working with children and continues to participate in much child development related training.

On 12/4/2023, program space was observed.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

ExCel Learning Center Daycare is a newly established childcare program offering passionate and purpose care to children age infant through school-age. The program is located in a residential neighborhood in a predominantly urban community.

ExCel Learning Center Daycare has the following website for families and persons in the community learn more about their programs: https://exceldaycare.com/.

ExCel Learning Center Daycare's mission is to "...provide outstanding childcare combined with an authentic, tailored educational experience for every student...leverage the skills and experience of our dedicated educators to cater to the unique needs of each child..." The program's goal is to "...stimulate and support the developmental growth of every child, with a particular focus on childhood literacy and social-emotional behavioral skills..."

The history of how ExCel Learning Center Daycare came to fruition in August 2023 is impressive! The Cedar Rapids Gazette newspaper recently featured an article spotlighting ExCel Learning Center Daycare as a new education-focused childcare within the community. In 2022, ExCel participated in the Cedar Rapids Economic Alliance Race for Space competition. ExCel advanced to the semi-finals in that competition keeping founder Darcel Pledge motivated in the education field (https://www.thegazette.com/sponsored-content/new-educational-focused-daycare-excel-learning-center-daycare-launches-in-sw-cedar-rapids/).

Owner and director Darcel Pledge is a local entrepreneur invested in the community's future. Ms. Pledge is a former elementary education teacher having much experience working with children. Ms. Pledge has goals for her program and herself including future participation in quality initiatives (e.g. CACFP, IQ4K). Ms. Pledge has a team of management persons helping with the program's systems of organization to help ensure administrative items are completed as required and maintained in a secure manner. Ms. Pledge continues to familiarize herself with licensing guidelines as well as her own program's policies and procedures. As a result, the first few weeks of operations have went smoothly. Management discussed the onboarding and hiring of new staff requiring professionalism and offering competitive wages. Ms. Pledge

reported her staff believe in and uphold the mission and goals of the program. Ms. Pledge additionally talked about the program's partnership with Kirkwood Community College.

ExCel Learning Center Daycare has emergency plans, policies, and procedures in place which are annually reviewed and updated as needed. The program successfully navigated the 2023 air quality issues.

ExCel Learning Center Daycare is working to build and maintain optimal communication between the program/staff and families. The program has an organized parent-staff/program communication center, offers regular program newsletters, utilizes technological communication resources, and supports family programming activities.

This program commenced operations only a short time prior to this first license visit. However, within that short timeframe, it's quite evident as to the owner's passion. The building has received a complete refresh including paint, flooring, food service areas and furnishings. Classrooms have been arranged in a thoughtful, inviting manner keeping learning at the forefront! Ms. Pledge created the program's unique curriculum incorporating Iowa Early Learning Standards, progress monitoring, targeted skill development, proactive intervention and development of core skills. Ms. Pledge discussed how the curriculum has components that are embedded throughout the child's entire day. Excel Learning Center Daycare will additionally offer a variety of program/family events (e.g. staff-family conferences, fall open house, seasonal celebrations), and on-site guest speakers (e.g. cheer camp, gardeners, art enrichments, community helpers). Ms. Pledge additionally talked about future goals regarding the outdoor play space.

ExCel Learning Center Daycare collaborates well with community agencies including local businesses, various school districts, local higher education entities, and health professionals. The program was recently featured on Everyday Iowa (https://www.kcrg.com/video/2023/09/25/everyday-iowa-excel-learning/) to discuss their grand opening, fall open house and unique curriculum.

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. Ms. Pledge discussed the additional cleaning and disinfecting that occurs on the weekends.

On the day of the monitoring visit, staff were nurturing and attentive to the children's needs. Activities observed throughout the rooms were many (e.g. morning greeting/arrive for the day, infant cares, morning gathering). Children had access to an array of materials and activities that encouraged innovative play. Staff provided a companionable presence allowing children to have many choices in their play experiences. Routine transitions (e.g. clean up activities, breakfast routines) worked smoothly into the program's welcoming
and cooperative play environment. 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:

109.11(7)c. To reduce the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning, all centers shall, on an annual basis prior to the heating season, have a professional inspect all fuel-burning appliances, including oil and gas furnaces, gas water heaters, gas ranges and ovens, and gas dryers, to ensure the appliances are in good working order with proper ventilation. All centers shall install one carbon monoxide detector on each floor of the center that is listed with Underwriters Laboratory (UL) as conforming to UL Standard 2034.
- Documentation of an annual all fuel burning appliance inspection was not found on-site on the day of the license visit. Please schedule, complete and forward documentation to licensing upon receipt.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

Review rule 109.11(7)b. Ensure radon testing is conducted within the first year of operations or by 8/23/2024.

Ensure documentation of a monthly fire drill and a monthly tornado drill is maintained all together in one format for the current and previous year.

Ensure documentation of a monthly outdoor play area inspection is maintained all together in one format for the current and previous year.

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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.