**Iowa Department of Human Services**

**CHILD CARE CENTER COMPLAINT**

**Name of Center:** Little Sprouts Children's Center New Hampton **Enrollment:** 106 **License ID:** 22117

**Street:** 201 N Locust **City:** New Hampton **IA** **Zip Code:** 50659 **County:** Chickasaw

**Mailing Address:** 201 N Locust

**Mailing City:** New Hampton **IA** **Zip Code:** 50659

**Director's Name:** Amy Ameling **Center Phone Number:** 641-394-5840

**On-Site Supervisors:** Monica Rittenberry & Kathy Speicher **E-Mail Address:** lscc.director.nh@gmail.com

**Date of Complaint:** 12-13-2023 **Date of Visit:** 12-19-2023

**[ ]** Scheduled **[X]** Unannounced **[ ]** NA

**[X]** Non-Compliance with Regulations Found **[ ]** Compliance with Regulations Found

**RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE**

**[X] NO CHANGES to licensing status recommended**

**[ ] PROVISIONAL license from** **to**

**[ ] SUSPENSION of License**

**[ ] REVOCATION of License**

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**Complaint Details:**

Did this complaint result in a serious injury? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Did this complaint result in a death to a child? ☐ Yes ☒ No

**Summary of Complaint:**

On 12/13/23 a concern was reported for an incident that occurred at Little Sprouts Children's Center New Hampton. An infant under the age of twelve months old is allowed to sleep with a 12 x 12 blanket in the Caterpillar room. It is reported that administration was made aware of the safe sleep violation and have continued to allow it to happen.

It was reported that I called Amy Ameling, the director, right away on 12/14/23 to report two staff members turned the program into DHH and I was going to be making a visit to the program. NOTE: It turns out this was miscommunication. There is a board member named Bekah, who contacted Ms. Ameling about being contacted by two staff members returning concerns in. Ms. Ameling did not tell staff members that I contacted her.

**Licensing Rules Relevant to the Complaint:**

109.12(5)e The provider shall follow safe sleep practices recommended by AAP for infants under one year of age:Infants shall always be placed on their back for sleep.Infants shall be placed on a firm mattress with a tight fitted sheet that meets Consumer Product Safety Commission federal standards.Infants shall not be allowed to sleep on a bed, sofa, air mattress or other soft surface. No child will be allowed to sleep in any items not designed for sleeping but not limited to, an infant seat, car seat, swing, bouncy seat.No toys, soft objects, stuffed animals, pillows, bumper pads, blankets, or loose bedding shall be allowed in the sleeping area with the infant.No co-sleeping shall be allowed.Sleeping infants shall be actively observed by sight and sound.If an alternate sleeping position is needed, a signed physician or physician assistant authorization with statement of medical reason is required.

**Inspection Findings:**

I made the decision to contact staff members by phone prior to my visit so that they could talk freely with me about concerns.

On 12/14/23 I interviewed three staff members by phone.

On 12/15/23 I spoke with one staff member by phone.

On 12/18/23 I spoke with one staff member by phone.

All the staff members provided me with consistent statements that a staff member in the Caterpillar room was allowing a child to sleep with a Taggy blanket so the child would sleep. The child does not sleep while at the center because she co-sleeps at home with the parents. It is reported that it is the child's natural instinct to put the blanket up by her face. A staff member in the room confronted the staff member allowing the blanket in the crib and told him it was not allowed. He said it was okay because the child was finally sleeping and he spoke with the child's mother about it. The concerns were reported first to Lisa Thiele, an administrator at the center after the first time a staff member witnessed the safe sleep violation. Ms. Thiele reportedly informed Amy Ameling, the director, and Monica Rittenberry, the on-site supervisor, about the concerns. The staff member thought the concerns were addressed but then she witnessed it occur again. A second staff member also witnessed the same staff member allow the child to sleep with a Taggy, even after it had been reported to administration. A staff member then went to the office to report the safe sleep violation to Ms. Ameling, Ms. Rittenberry and Ms. Thiele. The staff member was given the impression by administration that it was fine because the child was eight months old.

The safe sleep concern was first brought to the attention of administration on 12/08/23. Administration did not address the violation and put an end to it until 12/14/23 according to staff members. The staff member who violated the safe sleep policy continued to allow the child to sleep with a Taggy during this period of time.

Ms. Ameling sent me an email on 12/14/23 with the following information:

"We have an eight month old baby. Who's been with us for three months she exclusively cosleeps And her time at Daycare has been very rough on mom, her and the staff. She literally has not slept for more than 10 or 15 minutes a day the whole time she's been here she wakes up the instant she's laid in the crib. The staff has been holding her to sleep and we know that is not best practice."

"Monday my infant caregiver and the mother came up with a plan to try to ease her into crib sleeping. By rocking to sleep with her taggy, laying her down with the taggy. I was not privy to this plan. Since Monday, (the staff member) has been doing that, but not taking it away from her. Allowing her to have it yesterday one of the staff came to With concerns about this. She is (young), and I wanted to do my own investigation and find out exactly what is happening. (The infant staff member) was gone for the day, so I told her I would follow up with him today. Last night she called one of our board members to complain that she felt like I was turning a blind eye to her concern. I did my investigation today, and (the staff member) did say that that is the only way she will sleep. I told her he absolutely cannot let her lay down in her crib with it, even if the mom wants us to. he said OK and that he and mom was trying to help crib train her and not put her in danger bc she cosleeps every night."

On 12/15/23 I received a follow-up email from Ms. Ameling. The email stated that Ms. Ameling wrote a safe sleep violation zero tolerance policy. All infant room staff members will be required to take safe sleep training upon hire. Deviations from safe sleep policies are grounds for termination. The safe sleep policy went in to effect immediately. Regarding the staff member who broke the safe sleep violation he was suspended for two days and had to repeat a safe sleep course.

On 12/19/23 I made an unannounced visit to Little Sprouts Children's Center New Hampton. I interviewed Lisa Thiele, Monica Rittenberry and Amy Ameling. All three hold an administrative role at the center. All three were aware of a staff member violating safe sleep practices because it was brought to their attention by another staff member. Not one of the three administrators dealt with the violation immediately, nor did they follow-up to make sure another administrator deal with the situation. As a result of their lack of action the safe sleep violation continued to happen.

Ms. Ameling states they have sent staff members to safe sleep training. They had Jennifer Engelhardt from Child Care Resource and Referral come to the center and work with the infant room. She states she takes safe sleep seriously.

Ms. Ameling states she takes responsibility. She should have stood up immediately and went down to the infant room to deal with it. She has not prioritized well because she is so busy. Ms. Ameling states she is constantly dealing with staff members tattling on one another and there is drama all the time. When the staff member came to her about the violation, she thought it was much of the same and she should have taken it more seriously.

**Special Notes and Action Required:**

109.12(5)e. The provider shall follow safe sleep practices as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics for infants under the age of one. VIOLATED. An infant room staff member knowingly violated safe sleep practices and allowed an infant to sleep with a small blanket. Safe sleep violations cannot be violated.

Currently, the status of the center's license is unchanged. If you would like to respond to this report, please do so in writing and I will include the information in the licensing file.

**Consultant's Signature:**

Rebecca Frost

**Date:**

01-04-2024