Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Bright Futures Child Care Center

Provider No.: 52974

Address: 1310 West 1st Street, Vinton, IA, 52349

County: Benton

Director's Name: Bree Hepker & Molly Stark

On-Site Supervisor: Veronica "Roni" Nelson

Phone Number: 3194724840

E-Mail: BrightFuturesCCC25@gmail.com

HHS Visit Date: 09/08/2025

Licensing Period: 09/02/2025 to 09/01/2027

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 12/23/2024

Comments: Inspection on 12/23/24

Report Visit Type:

- [ ] PTO
- [ ] Licensing Visit
- [ ] Drop In
- [X] Administrative Change

License Type:

- [X] Full
- [ ] Provisional

Quality initiative:

- [ ] Accrediation

Program Duration:

- [X] Year-Round
- [ ] School Year
- [ ] Summer Only

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Program Population Served:

- [X] Infant(0-<24 Months)
- [X] Toddler
- [X] PreSchool
- [X] School Age
- [ ] All Ages

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Aged	Capacity
General	24	14	16	6	60
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

On 09/08/25 I made an unannounced licensing visit to Bright Futures Child Care Center, Inc. in Vinton. I met with Bree Hepker, the owner and co-director. Ms. Hepker has an AA in early childhood education and several years of experience working with children. Molly Stark is also an owner and co-director. Ms. Stark has an AA in business management and several years of experience working with children. Veronica “Roni” Nelson is the on-site supervisor. Ms. Nelson has over six years of experience working in childcare centers. The center employs fourteen staff members.

Ms. Hepker and Ms. Stark also own Early Beginnings Atkins Inc in Atkins. In addition, Ms. Hepker owns Early Beginnings Inc. in Van Horne.

Bright Futures Child Care Center, Inc. was given permission to open on 09/02/25. Ms. Hepker and Ms. Stark purchased Vinton Early Learning Center and the center was able to continue care without interruption to the families they serve. The staff members remained with the center. The center is open Monday through Friday from 6:30 am until 6:00 pm. t serves infants through school-aged children. There are currently 29 children enrolled. The center plans to apply for IQ4K.

The center operates out of the following rooms: infant room (Orange room, 6 weeks until 12 months), toddler room (Blue room, one-year-olds), two-year-olds (Purple room), and three and four-year-olds and school-age children (Yellow room). Ms. Hepker states the Green room is currently being used to store centers but once she clears it up, she plans to use it as a gross motor room. There is an additional room that is currently not being used (Red room). The Red room may eventually be where school-age children are cared for. An inspection of each room was completed. Windows provide natural lighting. The rooms are decorated with the children’s art projects, and posters to assist the children with the learning process, such as the alphabet, shapes, colors and numbers. Several rooms had pictures of the children’s families.

The centers observed on the day of the licensing visit include library, blocks/Legos, magnets, table toys, games, puzzles, transportation, Play-Doh, woodworking, listening, technology, art, dramatic play, writing, math, science/discovery, sensory table and music. Centers were arranged in a manner that allowed easy movement between activities, but it also allowed for clear supervision by staff members. Materials were in good condition. The materials are located at child level, so they are easily accessible to the children.

They use the Lillio Learning Curriculum. Each day the curriculum breaks down activities for literacy, discovery (math, science, social studies, social/emotional), and sensory/fine and gross motor. There is a book that comes with the curriculum that outlines activities for each category. Lesson plans are based on themes that last two weeks. Lesson plans were available for review in each room.

The center uses the Brightwheel app to complete daily sheets for the children under the age of two. The Brightwheel app

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does not have an area to document the children's mood, which is required. I recommend you document their mood under the notes section. Brightwheel is also used to communicate with all families in the center.

The rooms were in ratio the day of my visit.

There was a phone with emergency numbers and the center's address and phone number in each classroom and in the kitchen. Emergency fire and tornado procedures and evacuation diagrams were posted by most of the main program doors and outdoor exits in the center. Please post the emergency evacuation diagram near the door to the outside in the Orange room, Blue room and Yellow room. A daily schedule was posted in each room.

I reviewed documentation of monthly fire and tornado drills. This center just opened so the drills were completed by the previous owner.

I reviewed documentation of monthly playground inspections. The inspections were completed by the previous owner.

The radon test was completed in December 2024 and is good for five years. Results were within EPA guidelines.

The annual fuel burning inspection was completed and no concerns were noted. Carbon monoxide detectors are included in the fire safety system located on the ceiling in each classroom. There is also a carbon monoxide detector in the reception area. Outlets were protected. The fire marshal inspection occurred on 12/23/24.

The center does not participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) but follows the guidelines. Ms. Hepker states they are currently in the process of applying for CACFP. The program provides breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack. All food is prepared on site. Jamie Halbfass is the cook. The center uses a four week rotation of menus. Dishes are returned to the kitchen and put through the industrial dishwasher to be cleaned and sanitized. There are also sinks available to use the three-step method.

The kitchen was observed to be clean and organized. There are two refrigerators and an upright freezer. There were thermometers present. Food items were stored according to NHSPS guidelines. Menus and allergies were posted. There is also a refrigerator in the infant room and thermometers were present.

The center provides one brand of formula, jar food and cereal for the infants. Parents bring their own food for the infants if they want a different brand. Bottles are made in the classroom and are also cleaned and sanitized in the classroom. The infant room has a dishwasher and three sinks available for the three-step method.

The center is using Member's Mark Commercial Sanitizer (Pro Force) to sanitize the food tables. It has a one minute dwell time. Oxivir Tb is used to disinfect the changing tables. This has a one minute dwell time.

I discussed or observed diaper changing procedures with staff members and proper procedures are being followed.

There are multiple sinks, toilets and changing tables in the center. Handwashing and diaper changing procedures were posted in most locations. A diaper changing procedure must be posted near the changing table in the infant room. There was not a pattern of disregard so this will not be cited.

The center uses cribs in the infant room and cots are used to nap for the older children.

The parent information is located on a bulletin board inside the entrance. The childcare consultant and the handbook availability were posted. The mandatory reporter's information is posted. The permission to open without a license was conspicuously hung. A no-smoking sign was posted at the entrance.

There are three fenced in playground areas, but only two of the areas are being used. The two areas being used are spacious. The space on the north side of the building is used for toddlers and two-year-old children. They are scheduled to use the space at different times. Rubber mulch is used for surface cushioning. There is a slide for the children. There is a shade structure and trees available for shade. There are riding and pushing toys, a sandbox, playhouse, bike path and a picnic table for the children to rest.

The playground on the south side of the building is used for the older children. There are trees and shade structures for

shade. This area has a bike path, playhouse, art center, sandbox, and basketball hoops. There is a piece of climbing equipment with slides and rubber mulch is used for fall surfacing.

Staff and children's files were reviewed at the time of the licensing visit. I reviewed eight children files. They were in great condition.

I reviewed two staff files. They were in great condition.

I reviewed policy and procedures, staff and parent handbooks. The necessary written emergency procedures and policies were present. Emergency Preparedness Plans have been completed.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

Staff members had terrific interaction with the children. They were on the floor actively engaged with the children and introducing them to activities. In the two-year-old room they helped the children build things with magnets, in the preschool room they used the science center to look at and identify rocks, minerals and bugs with magnify glasses. In the toddler room the staff members encouraged the children to use their imaginations. In the infant room the staff member was great at multi-tasking. She fed and rocked a child while also introducing the other children to fun activities. I observed staff members cleaning rooms and modeling good manners. Staff members provided praise and used positive reinforcement to encourage good behavior and used positive redirection when necessary. Staff members provided clear and easy to understand directions. The staff members took their children outside to enjoy the beautiful weather. The children appeared to enjoy their time at the center.

Staff members seemed encouraged by the change of ownership.

Ms. Nelson states the teachers really care about the children. They are not just there for a paycheck.

Ms. Nelson states the staff members build relationships with the children and the families.

Ms. Nelson states she has seen the center "come a long way" in the time she has been at the center.

Ms. Hepker states all the doors in the center have door hinges to protect the children's fingers from getting hurt in the doors.

Ms. Hepker states it is great for safety reasons that the center has restricted front door access. They have an entry way and visitors must use a code to enter the door to the center or be let in by the receptionist.

Ms. Hepker states she and Ms. Stark are not at the center everyday and Ms. Nelson is great and has been very helpful as they took over as a new center. She knows what is going on and the staff members respect her.

Ms. Hepker states she wants to invest in Ms. Nelson and is hoping she will use the TEACH program to get her CDA and then she will qualify for WAGES. Currently no one is using the TEACH program or receiving WAGES.

Ms. Hepker states she plans to apply for IQ4K level 1 as soon as possible.

Ms. Hepker states they have added calm-down areas in every room, except for the infants. The children have really caught on quickly on how to use the area.

There are pictures of all the staff members at the entrance. Others can write the staff member a positive message and attach it to the staff member's picture.

The program is a bus stop for the local schools and for one child on an IEP who attends school outside of the Vinton.

The center is in a secure building and there are cameras in the classrooms and on the playground that can record.

The center has organized and easy to read staff and children's files and an organized licensing binder.

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The center works with Grant Wood AEA, Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R), Early Access and CART (Childcare Alliance Response Team).

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

4. Any corrective action plans, provisional license, and safety plans-steps to get into compliance

N/A

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

A full license is issued. All DHS licensing standards and procedures must be maintained during the renewal period.

I met with Ms. Hepker following my observation in the classrooms to discuss my licensing visit. Ms. Hepker assured me they would get the diaper changing procedures were posted.

The front door to get into the center is not ADA compliant because the motor is not working so the person entering is required to open the door on their own. Ms. Hepker is going to fix this so the door is AEA compliant.

Ms. Hepker states she is going to buy more door lever locks that allow staff members to open doors but not the children. This is for the safety of the children. She also is going to purchase more safety locks for the cupboards and drawers.

Ms. Hepker states she needs to purchase more garbage cans that have a lid that locks so children do not have access to soiled diapers.

Ms. Hepker would like to purchase touchless sensor sinks for the classrooms to help control the water temperatures in the rooms.

Ms. Hepker states the she is unable to use the cameras in the center because something is not working. She does not know if it is the monitor or the recording system. She is going to have the company visit the center to fix the security camera system.

I would recommend Ms. Hepker contact Rachael Bonefas from Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) to discuss applying for the Growing Iowa Program to help fund the above safety needs.

On 12/16/25 an administrative change is being made to change the capacity of the center to 60 children: 12 infants, 12 toddlers, 14 two-yea-olds, and 22 for ages three and older.

Date: 12/16/2025

HHS Licensing Consultant: Becky Frost

Non-compliance with any of the mandated regulatory requirements listed above may lead to the cancellation or revocation of your Child Care License. Please take steps necessary to completely address each of the violations noted above.

Child Care Resource and Referral is an excellent resource for providers to access training options and support in your area. You can reach Child Care Resource and Referral at **https://iowaccrr.org**.