Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Drake University Head Start - Merle Hay

Provider No.: 50957

Address: 3800 Merle Hay RdSuite 323, Des Moines, IA, 50310

County: Polk

Director's Name: Susan Abel

On-Site Supervisor: Lisa Proctor

Phone Number: 6417912922

E-Mail: susan.abel@drake.edu

HHS Visit Date: 12/16/2025

Licensing Period: 01/01/2026 to 01/01/2028

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 04/09/2024

Comments:

Report Visit Type:

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

License Type:

- [X] Full
- [ ] Provisional

Quality initiative:

Quality Rating: 3

- [ ] Accrediation

Program Duration:

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

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*
Sunday			
Monday		8:00 AM to 3:00 PM	
Tuesday		8:00 AM to 3:00 PM	
Wednesday		8:00 AM to 3:00 PM	
Thursday		8:00 AM to 3:00 PM	
Friday		8:00 AM to 3:00 PM	
Saturday			

Program Population Served:

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

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Aged	Capacity
General		8	34		42
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

Drake University Head Start - Merle Hay opened in January 2020. This Head Start program is located in Merle Hay Mall. This Head Start offers a full day program to children ages three to five. There are secured entrances to the preschool. Susan Abel is the coordinator of this program. The program has three classrooms. This Head Start program has an outdoor playground.

An unannounced visit was completed today. All areas subject to HHS licensing rules were reviewed. Mandatory postings are in place at the entrance. Classrooms schedules and lesson plans are in place. Classrooms are well furnished with age appropriate learning materials and supplies. The classrooms are spacious and arranged in a way that children can easily access the labeled interest centers.

Merle Hay 1 had ten children present. Mallory Saiz is the lead teacher. Shaniece Alford is the teacher assistant. Merle Hay 2 had thirteen children present. Stephanie McDaniel is the lead teacher. Claire Painter is the teacher assistant. TMerle Hay 3/toddlers had six children present. Victoria Smith is the lead teacher. Molly Painter is the teacher assistant. Children were observed in the classrooms today. Children were observed during lunch time, during transition time, and some children were observed resting. Staff were sitting beside children, assisting the children with their various activities. Interactions between the staff and children were observed to be positive during the visit.

The center serves breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack. The center contracts with Des Moines Public Schools for meals. Lunch served today was cheeseburgers on wheat buns, french fries, apple sauce and milk.

The center has an outdoor playground. There is fencing around the playground. Surfacing is rubber tile. The center

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

completes monthly playground checks.

The center doesn't provide transportation.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

The center participates in the IQ4K program and has a three star rating. Head Start programs are well supported preschool programs. These classrooms are very well supplied classrooms with age appropriate furnishings, toys and educational materials. Children benefit from Head Start's ability to coordinate services from other educational and health professionals.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

One staff had overdue SING check.
One staff needed an updated physical.
One staff needed current Mandatory Reporter training.

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

NA

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

The center has a full license.

*Note: If you are the Child Care Center Director and you feel something is unclear or unjustly cited, please contact me (phone 515-362-7823; email melinda.larson@hhs.iowa.gov) so that we may discuss the issue. If necessary, I can make a notation in your record. You may also send a letter that will be included in your licensing file noting any disagreement you may have with this report. If you have the need for any additional information discussed during my visit, please contact me and I will forward the information to you. Thank you.

*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.

Date: 12/21/2025

HHS Licensing Consultant: Melinda Larson, Child Care Licensing Consultant

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**.