Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: SPARKS Ames

Provider No.: 52953

Address: 2807 Duff Ave, Ames, IA, 50010

County: Story

Director's Name: Owen Ballard

On-Site Supervisor: Liz Freeman

Phone Number: 5152741501

E-Mail: oballard@campfireiowa.org

HHS Visit Date: 11/13/2025

Licensing Period: 08/01/2025 to 08/01/2027

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 05/08/2025

Comments: Fire inspections due at least every three years; completed by Ames Fire Dept--Jason Ziph.

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:

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

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Aged	Capacity
General				27	27
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

This report is to reflect an administrative change at the center request. Sparks Ames has elected to be a year-round programming. During the school year, programming is offered after school dismissal until 5:30 PM Monday through Friday. The summer programming will have extended hours.

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An unannounced licensing visit was completed on 11-13-25. Assistant Director Liz Freeman was present for the visit.

The director is Owen Ballard. Owen has a Bachelors in Child and Family Services with a Masters in Public Administration; along with years of experience. Liz Freeman is the assistant director/on-site supervisor and has a Bachelor's degree along with experience. Both meet the criteria for their positions.

SPARKS-Ames is an after school program and summer program that opened August of 2025 and is part of the Campfire: Heart of Iowa. Programming takes place at the Camp Canwita site in Ames. This is natural reserve/park area with a lot of trails and outdoor activities.

SPARKS-Ames operates after school until 5:30 PM Monday through Friday for children in Kindergarten up to 8th Grade. The program is offered on non-school days during the school year as well. Additionally, programming is available during the summer Monday-Friday 730 AM to 5:30 PM.

The program offers an afternoon snack for after school. During the summer two snacks are provided and family's provide the child's lunch.

There is policy in place regarding close supervision by staff and rules governing the distance children are kept from the creek that is located several hundred feet from the main programming area.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

Staff were heavily engaged in the group activities with children that were content and eager participants.

Staff work well with the children and with one another.

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This is a nature-based program that encourages creativity and team work.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

NA, admin change

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

NA

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

A full two year license is recommended.

Administrative Changes to reflect the program to be offered year round.

Date: 05/04/2026

HHS Licensing Consultant: Maggie Gibson, SWIV

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**.