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

Name of Center: Hand in Hand-Barrington **Enrollment:** 79 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 24374

Street: 905 Barrington Pkwy **City:** Marion Iowa **Zip** 52302 **County:** Linn

Mailing Address: 905 Barrington Pkwy, Marion, IA, 52302

Director's Name: Kathy Kolthoff **Phone Number:** 319-377-5686

On-Site Supervisor(s): April Walsh, Taylor Sorrell **E-Mail:** hih@handinhandinc.com

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

X **Licensing Visit** X **Unannounced Visit** **Off Year Visit** **Administrative Change**

LICENSING VISITS

New Application X **Re-Application** **NA**

Signed Application (470-0722) Received **Yes** **No** X **NA** **Date Signed:**

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

Date Inspected: 03-06-2023

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	16	12	40	30	98
Summer					0

QRS Rating: 4

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 06-01-2022 to 06-01-2024
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Amy Lyons **Date:** 05-02-2023

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

Not applicable.

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

Hand in Hand operates multiple programs throughout the community and has been in operation for 21 years. Specifically, Hand in Hand - Barrington has been in operation since January, 2008. Hand in Hand - Barrington is a profit program which operates year-round Monday through Friday 6:30am to 6:00pm. The program serves children age infant through school-age. Hand in Hand - Barrington includes a statewide voluntary 4-year-old preschool program in collaboration with the Linn Mar School District. Current enrollment is 79.

Hand in Hand multi-site owner/director is Kathy Kolthoff. Ms. Kolthoff holds a degree in Early Childhood Education and Business Management. Ms. Kolthoff has achieved the National Administrators Credential (NAC) and is a member of ational Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Hand in Hand multi-site management personnel includes Ms. Sara Swestka who has been with Hand in Hand for over 20 years. Ms. Swestka holds her Bachelor of Art degree in Elementary Education and Early Childhood Education. Ms. Swestka has many years of experience working with children, continues to participate in much child development related training, and has achieved NAC. Hand in Hand multisite curriculum specialist Katie Simmons has been with Hand in Hand for over 17 years, and specifically, been part of the management team since 2011. Ms. Simmons has an AA degree in early childhood education, has much experience working with children, and continues to participate in child development related training. Hand in Hand multisite school-age coordinator is Katie Little. Ms. Little has been with Hand in Hand since December, 2017. Ms. Little has a BA degree in nursing, an AA degree in marketing management, over 6 years of experience working with children, and continues to participate in much child development related training. Site specific on-site supervisors of Hand in Hand - Barrington are Taylor Sorrell and April Walsh. Ms. Sorrell has been this program's on-site supervisor since May, 2016. Ms. Sorrell has been with Hand in Hand for over 12 years. Ms. Sorrell has much experience working with children and continues to participate in much child development related training. Ms. Walsh has been the on-site supervisor since August 2021. Ms. Walsh has been with Hand in Hand for over 7 years and continues to participate in much child development related training.

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

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

Hand in Hand offers a variety of early learning/childcare programming options to help meet the needs of children and families in the community.

The year 2023 marks Hand in Hand's 21st year of providing childcare and early learning services to children and their families throughout the community. Congratulations on celebrating 21 years! Specifically, Hand in Hand- Barrington will be in their 15th year of operation during 2023.

The philosophy of Hand in Hand is to "…understand your needs and your child's needs and offer convenient options....that go way beyond after school needs...offers a variety of activities that promote life skills such as teamwork, sportsmanship, creativity, and leadership..."

Hand in Hand has the following website for families and the community to learn more about their programs: http://handinhandinc.com/.

Hand in Hand has a history of participating in quality initiatives including local quality initiatives. The program has achieved 4-Star QRS. Management reported future goals related to IQ4K and PBIS training. In 2022, Hand in Hand received a "Certificate of Appreciation" from the Linn Mar Community School District to certify that Hand in Hand made a significant and important contribution to Linn Mar High School and is held in the highest esteem as a member of their school community.

Founding original owner Ms. Kolthoff is a local entrepreneur invested in the local and surrounding communities. Ownership and management of Hand in Hand has remained consistent. This includes owner Ms. Kolthoff, management personnel Ms. Swestka, curriculum specialist Ms. Simmons, school-age coordinator Ms. Little, and specific on-site supervisors Ms. Sorrell and Ms. Walsh. Management is extremely organized, and in turn, the program operates smoothly. Hand in Hand has noteworthy systems of organization in place to help ensure administrative items are completed and maintained as required. Management is knowledgeable of licensing guidelines as well as their own policies and procedures. Management has achieved NAC.

Management team continues to be mentors throughout the community as well as part of an online innovative national director social media group. Hand in Hand management team also continues to be part of a local task force known as "Building Community Childcare Solutions" which examines childcare needs and solutions. In 2021, Hand in Hand management team established an optional monthly employee wellness challenge to help focus on lowering stress and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. In 2022, Hand in Hand undertook the immense task of establishing a company-wide unique online process for staff onboarding, training, and continuous transfer of knowledge. This also lead to an updating of the company's Employee Manual and a new Lead Teacher Manual both of which have become part of the company's online staff onboarding program. In 2023, management enhanced hiring practices for room lead staff including having new leads rotate shadowing seasoned teachers and hosted semiannual lead staff meetings, (e.g. welcoming idea generation, tapping into specific staff/room expertise, collective linking of resources). In 2023, Hand in Hand also recently added 3 new sites and already renewed contracts.

Since the last monitoring visit, Hand in Hand - Barrington has retained seasoned staff as well as hired some new staff. Staff throughout the classrooms reported celebrating 18 years, 10 years, 8 years, 2 years, 1 year and 7 months of employment with Hand in Hand. Management supports staff professional goals including WAGE$ program. To help support employees, management has established an annual staff requirements calendar book with necessary forms, materials, and so on as well as a quarterly employee newsletter that includes helpful policy reminders and tips and classroom tools/resources. Management continues to support employees through an accrued point system rewarding staff for their daily dedication, the ability to collaborate among all Hand in Hand sites to share materials, curriculum, joys, challenges, and ideas/planning, and staff incentives (e.g. childcare, snack cart, social media contests, wellness challenges, birthday acknowledgement, teacher appreciation wall, employee of the month). Ms. Sorrell and Ms. Walsh discussed being proud of their core team of staff who have strong relationships with families and the community. Management talked about how their seasoned staff are really outstanding at embracing new staff helping them become familiar with the enrolled children and policies and procedures. In the 2yo room, a staff was observed providing insightful guidance to a newer room staff.

Hand in Hand - Barrington has emergency plans, policies, and procedures in place which are annually reviewed and updated as needed. Hand in Hand sites have successfully navigated through the 2008 historic Linn County Flood, 2019 winter Polar Vortex, 8/20/20 Derecho Storm event and 2019 health pandemic. In 2023, Hand in Hand began monthly employee safety plan reviews focusing on a series of topics including first-aid, housekeeping, ergonomics, proper lifting, workplace violence, and slips, trips and falls.

Hand in Hand - Barrington continues efforts at optimal communication between the program/staff and families. The program has an organized parent-staff/program information center, offers regular program newsletters, utilizes technological communication resources, and supports family programming activities. Family programming activities include open houses, parent/program conferences, holiday parties, themed events, preschool graduation ceremony, book fairs, on-site guest events (e.g. Blank Park Zoo, Humane Society, fire department, police department), graduate luncheon, "Rise and Shine" breakfast buddies, and giving back community service projects.

Building and grounds are well-maintained. In early 2023, the building underwent a refresh including new paint, new flooring, new area rugs, new cabinetry, and updated kitchen. Upon arrival into the childcare, there is now a separate staff/family greeting area and staff resource/meeting room. Ms. Sorrell and Ms. Walsh discussed future fundraising goals related to obtaining a new 2-5yo outdoor playground structure. The kitchen is spacious, sanitary and organized. A new program cook has been hired since the last review. The cook discussed having moved from working in a classroom to the culinary side of childcare. Classrooms are arranged in a thoughtful manner with learning at the forefront. Children's accomplishments (e.g. artwork, milestone work, footprint butterflies, cotton ball clouds, tissue paper flowers) are displayed throughout the program space. Materials are accessible to children. Staff were observed communicating with children verbally, using picture cues, and through sign language. Curriculum is inclusive including a combination of teacher inspired

ideas and academic based learning strategies (e.g. individualized Handwriting Without Tears, intense kindergarten readiness, Everyday Mathematics, A Little Spot of Emotion and Feeling, new Hand in Hand pilot program "We are safe. We are kind. We are workers."). Curriculum additionally incorporates on-site guest speaker events, themed days, extra outside enrichments (e.g. Kiddy Keys, Dance Academy) and sentimental memory book for families as each child graduates into the next classroom. Curriculum goals include developing a stronger infant and 2yo curriculum as well as training on and implementing new PBIS teachings.

Hand in Hand - Barrington collaborates well with community partners including local school districts, early access persons, CCR&R, local businesses, and health professionals. Hand in Hand - Barrington continues their specific partnership with the Linn Mar School District in order to provide a statewide 4-year-old voluntary classroom. Hand in Hand does provide some transportation to and from their preschool program. Ms. Sorrell and Ms. Walsh talked about how enrollment for the 2023 summer program and enrollment for the 2023-2024 school-year has almost reached capacity. Management discussed utilizing CART and AEA services when needed in partnership with their own new in-house, multi-site curriculum leader Katie Simmons.

The infant room has a “no shoe” policy and was observed supporting safe sleep practices.

Management discussed how 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. Hand in Hand has policies and procedures in place for hand washing, diapering, cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting. Staff were able to verbalize and engage in these processes. Cleaning checklists and daily sanitation reminders were observed to be posted in various areas of the center.

On the day of the monitoring visit, staff were nurturing and attentive to the children's needs. Areas of study throughout the classrooms included Circus Week, farm animals, spring and butterflies. One child arriving for her 4yo preschool day was overheard squealing with delight as she reached the classroom door to see it covered in crafted popcorn leading into the circus! The 4-year-old preschool room was observed to have a circus inspired adventure happening from the room decor (with celebrated child artwork of clown handprint art, big top tents, trapeze flyer) to the clever center play experiences offered (shoebox circus ring with stuffed lion taming). Children in all rooms had access to an array of materials (e.g. books, imaginative play options, sensory items, building materials, journaling, crafts) that encouraged innovative play. Activities were many (e.g. infant cares, group "Y" discussion with "y"ogurt song, book reading "Strictly No Elephants", 3yo room gathering song with sign language, All About Me sharing experience, outdoor large gross motor play). Staff provided a companionable presence allowing children to have many choices in their play experiences. Classical music was heard quietly playing in the 2yo room as breakfast clean-up/transitions occurred. Routine transitions (e.g. food service rituals, clean-up activities) worked smoothly into the program's welcoming and cooperative play environment. Staff was observed providing minor first-aid (e.g. comfort, ice pack) to a child while on the outdoor playground. Outstanding PBIS techniques were observed in the 4yo preschool room and 3yo childcare room (e.g. a song about listening to help get back on track, "kiss your brain", song "Animal Action" for take a breaks to move around during group discussion, encourage movement to book area for a short group break). Throughout the classrooms, 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:

None noted.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

Continue to ensure each enrolled child has a signed and dated Iowa immunization certificate, provided and prescribed by the state department of public health on file.

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The program's license remains in full status. 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.