Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Mustangs Child Care

Provider No.: 46117

Address: 223 E 2nd St, Newell, IA, 50568

County: Buena Vista

Director's Name: Molly Montag

On-Site Supervisor: Jami Sievers

Phone Number: 7122724147

E-Mail: montagm@newell-fonda.k12.ia.us

HHS Visit Date: 07/20/2026

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

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 09/15/2025

Comments:

Report Visit Type:

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

License Type:

- [X] Full
- [ ] Provisional

Quality initiative:

- [ ] Accrediation

Program Duration:

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

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HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*
Sunday			
Monday	6:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Tuesday	6:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Wednesday	6:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Thursday	6:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Friday	6:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Saturday			

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	6	17	20	13	56
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

I completed an unannounced visit at Mustangs Childcare Center in Newell, Iowa on July 20, 2026. During the visit, I met with the director, Molly Montag, as well as Jamie Sievers, who manages administrative tasks for the program. Molly has completed training in Passport to Early Childhood Education and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The Passport to Early Childhood Education program provides flexible, self-paced training that helps childcare staff build essential skills in health and safety, early learning practices, and positive relationship-building. It is free for Iowa professionals, meets Iowa HHS and IQ4K requirements, and offers approved professional development credits, including eligibility toward the National Administrator Credential

The childcare program operates year-round out of a free-standing building and uses a shared commons area in the elementary school during the school year for its after-school program. The facility is owned and overseen by the elementary school and provides care for children ranging from infancy through school age. The center is organized into four classroom areas: an infant room for children from birth to 18 months, a toddler room for children 18 to 36 months, a preschool classroom, and a school-age area located in the school's common dining space.

I observed all areas of the center, including classrooms, activities, nutrition practices, health and safety procedures, playground, and administrative review.

Each classroom is thoughtfully arranged into activity centers using furniture, shelving, and play structures. These areas were set up to maintain clear sightlines and avoid blind spots, supporting smooth and attentive supervision. A wide selection of age-appropriate toys and materials was available throughout the center, all in good repair and inviting for children’s play. A theme-based curriculum is an approach that organizes learning activities around a central topic or idea. Teachers select a

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theme—such as seasons, community helpers, animals, or transportation—and build classroom experiences that connect to that theme across different developmental areas. This approach helps children make meaningful connections as they explore the theme through art, stories, dramatic play, outdoor activities, and hands-on exploration. Theme-based learning supports engagement, encourages curiosity, and provides a cohesive structure for planning developmentally appropriate activities throughout the center. During my visit, I observed warm and effective classroom management throughout the center. Children appeared comfortable with the daily routine and moved between activities smoothly, demonstrating that they clearly understood expectations. Staff provided gentle guidance and offered directions in a calm, supportive manner. I also observed frequent positive encouragement, with staff acknowledging children's efforts, praising cooperative behavior, and helping children navigate interactions in a reassuring way. The overall atmosphere was structured yet nurturing, with staff actively engaged in creating a positive learning environment. There are schedules of activities posted.

In the infant room, the crib area was clearly separated from the play space, creating a calm and organized environment. Staff were engaged with infants at floor level, offering warm interactions and attentive care. Diapering practices were observed to be sanitary and consistent with required procedures, and safe sleep practices were appropriately followed.

The center also maintains first aid kits throughout the facility, along with an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) on site, demonstrating attention to overall safety and preparedness. Fire and tornado drills are conducted monthly, helping ensure that both staff and children are familiar with emergency procedures. Radon testing has been completed and within normal limits. The annual fuel burning inspection has been completed.

A copy of the planned menu was posted, and food handling and service practices were observed to be appropriate. Meals are prepared by the school and served in a way that supports a calm and positive mealtime environment. Staff sat with the children at the tables, offering supervision while also modeling healthy eating habits and positive social interactions during meals.

The center has two inviting playground areas that offer children a variety of outdoor experiences. The east playground includes a preschool-sized climbing structure, a riding merry-go-round, paved space for active play, and plenty of riding toys for children to enjoy. Water play is also available, adding a fun sensory element to outdoor time. Foam tile surfacing is in place beneath elevated equipment, and all structures were observed to be in good repair. An outdoor awning provides comfortable shade, helping create a pleasant play environment on warm days.

To support the goal of increasing enrollment, the center is exploring several strategies that build on existing strengths and community connections. These include enhancing communication with families through regular updates, highlighting program offerings, and sharing information about curriculum, routines, and special activities. Strengthening relationships with the elementary school—such as coordinating with preschool staff and engaging the school board—may also help increase visibility and encourage referrals. Additionally, continued collaboration with CCR&R can provide guidance on outreach, marketing, and quality improvements that support long-term growth. Together, these efforts are intended to help the center reach more families and expand enrollment in a steady, sustainable way.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

The center is receptive to working more closely with CCR&R and is eager to learn about the full range of support available to them. Because the program operates on the same property as the elementary school, it fits naturally into the continuum of care offered to families in the community. This shared setting also provides opportunities for collaboration, including access to curriculum resources from the school's 3-year-old preschool program. Staff are also interested in utilizing CCR&R's broader supports, including guidance from the financial coach, which may offer helpful financial benefits and planning tools for the program.

Each summer, the center sets aside a special week to refresh our space with deep cleaning, a fresh coat of paint, and thoughtful fixes to keep everything feeling welcoming and well cared for.

The center hopes to create more fundraising opportunities to help support small projects and improvements. The community has always been wonderfully supportive, and past efforts have been both meaningful and successful.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

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109.9(2)d: All files contain sufficient information and authorization to allow the center to secure emergency medical and dental services at any time child is in center's care.

109.9(2)j: School-age (for children five years and older and enrolled in school): Annual statement of health status signed by parent is submitted prior to admission, certifies that the child is free of communicable disease, and lists allergies, medications and acute/chronic conditions.

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

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

Targeted Assessment: Behavior Management

I discussed with Molly regarding her oversight of behavior management related to helping childcare staff: 1) Understand expectations, 2) managing frustrations, 3) monitor performance.

Molly shares that this is a small center, and she and her staff have built strong, supportive relationships. Staff feel comfortable letting one another know when they need a break, and they agree that when they begin to feel frustrated, they reach out to the other staff in their room or to Molly or another team member for help.

Molly is trained in PBIS, or Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. PBIS is an approach that focuses on creating a positive, predictable environment by teaching and reinforcing positive behaviors, preventing challenging behaviors before they occur, and responding in a consistent, supportive way when issues arise. These are the expectations that Molly sets, and the staff follow this framework in their daily interactions to help keep the environment calm, encouraging, and child-centered.

Please provide documentation of above-mentioned by 08/30/26.

A full license will remain in effect at this time.

Please enter all staff trainings in i-PoWer

At least one visit will be made to the center during the next year.

Date: 07/21/2026

HHS Licensing Consultant: Leann Steinhauer

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**.