Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Hand in Hand-Barrington

Provider No.: 24374

Address: 905 Barrington Pkwy, Marion, IA, 52302

County: Linn

Director's Name: Kathy Kolthoff

On-Site Supervisor: April Walsh, Taylor Sorrell

Phone Number: 3193775686

E-Mail: hih@handinhandinc.com

HHS Visit Date: 04/20/2026

Licensing Period: 06/01/2026 to 06/01/2028

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 03/27/2026

Comments:

Report Visit Type:

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

License Type:

- [X] Full
- [ ] Provisional

Quality initiative:

Quality Rating: 2

- [ ] Accrediation

Program Duration:

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

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HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*
Sunday			
Monday	6:30 AM to 6:00 PM		
Tuesday	6:30 AM to 6:00 PM		
Wednesday	6:30 AM to 6:00 PM		
Thursday	6:30 AM to 6:00 PM		
Friday	6:30 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	16	12	40	30	98
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

The Hand in Hand Inc Early Learning Centers original and founding owner is Kathy Kolthoff. Ms. Kolthoff is a local entrepreneur who began by opening a home childcare in 1998. Then in 2021 due to family and community need, Ms. Kolthoff's home childcare relocated and expanded into licensed childcare. Over the last 28 years, Hand in Hand Inc Family Learning Centers has broadened locations including some in partnership with local school districts. This inspection and license report pertain 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-Friday 6:30am to 6:00pm. The program serves children age infant through school-age. The Hand in Hand - Barrington license does include a universal preschool provided in collaboration with the Linn Mar School District. Total enrolled and attending children were reported to be 85 on 4/20/2026.

The Hand in Hand Inc Early Learning Centers multi-site owner and executive 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 National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) as well as the Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children (IAEYC). The Hand in Hand Inc Early Learning Centers regional director is Ms. Sara Swestka who has been with the program for over 20 years. Ms. Swestka holds a BA Degree in Elementary Education and Early Childhood Education. Ms. Swestka has experience working with children, continues to participate in child development related training and has achieved NAC. The Hand in Hand Inc Early Learning Centers multi-site curriculum specialist Katie Simmons has been with the program for over 19 years, and specifically, been part of the management team since 2011. Ms. Simmons has an AA degree in early childhood education, has experience working with children and participates in professional development. The Hand in Hand Inc Early Learning Centers multi-site school-age coordinators are Molly Luedeman and Lindsey DeDecker. Ms. Luedeman has an early childhood education administration degree, has been employed with the program for several years, has experience working with children and

participates in professional development. Ms. DeDecker has been employed with the program for several years, has experience working with children and continues to participate in professional development. 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 14 years. Ms. Sorrell has experience working with children and participates in professional development. Ms. Walsh has been the on-site supervisor since August 2021. Ms. Walsh has been with Hand in Hand for over 9 years. Ms. Walsh has experience working with children and participates in professional development.

On 4/20/2026, program space was observed. Primary programming occurs in age defined classrooms. Sufficient restrooms including hand washing sinks are available to accommodate total capacity. The program has access to age defined outdoor play areas. There is an on-site kitchen where all childcare food is prepared by the center chef. The chef discussed having previous culinary experience as well as having completed ServSafe. On 4/20/2026, areas of study throughout the building for the month included spring, farm animals, fruits and vegetables, earth day, weather and Easter. Activities observed included infant cares (e.g. peek-a-boo), small group work (e.g. book reading), center play exploration, and outdoor large gross motor play. During the monitoring visit, routine transitions were also observed to go smoothly and included clean-up procedures, snack rituals, and restroom/drink breaks. Evidence of previous days' learning was displayed throughout the space and included much clever child displays of artwork and underway lesson on the lifecycle of a butterfly. It was extremely noteworthy that upon entering the universal preschool room, one could feel as though they had time traveled back to ancient Egypt with cleverly created camels, mummies, maps of Egypt, a pyramid and so much more! Curriculum allowed for a variety of experiences that were observed to pique child interest as well as build cognitive skills, strengthen emotional intelligence, enhance physical coordination, and encourage the use of social graces. On 4/20/2026, staff were observed to be in ratio, utilizing positive redirection when needed and engaging in programming with the children. Children appeared comfortable with staff and to be enjoying the day.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

The mission of Hand in Hand is to "...provide a safe, nurturing, and engaging environment where every child can build a strong foundation for lifelong learning. We support development through age-appropriate practices, individualized care and meaningful experiences that foster growth, confidence and a love for learning in every child we serve..." The specific school-age vision is to "...provide a safe, enriching environment where children can spend time before or after school...to present children with the life skills of teamwork, sportsmanship, creativity and leadership through exciting, challenging activities..."

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

Hand in Hand - Barrington has achieved IQ4K Level 2. 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.

As of 4/20/2026, Hand in Hand - Barrington continues to have a seasoned management team (e.g. Ms. Kolthoff, Ms. Swestka, Ms. Simmons, Ms. Luedeman, Ms. DeDecker, Ms. Walsh, Ms. Sorrell). 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. There continues to be local collaboration among all Hand in Hand programs for the sharing of materials, curriculum, ideas, planning, new staff orientation, new staff shadowing/training, behavior strategies and professional development training. The management team also 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 is additionally part of a local task force known as "Building Community Childcare Solutions" which examines childcare needs and solutions. Management acknowledged having a professional seasoned team of staff who work hard. Management discussed how they continue to have regular communication with all staff about a variety of topics including behavior strategies, budgeting and maintenance. Management talked about having an Employee of the Month, "Golden Goose Award", staff shout-outs, regular treats and monthly attendance recognition.

On 4/20/2026, Hand in Hand - Barrington was again found to be maintaining required postings, maintaining a family program information center, offering regular newsletters, utilizing technological communication resources, and offering family programming activities (e.g. upcoming preschool art show). Notes of gratitude and thanks for staff were observed to be posted in various classrooms. Hand in Hand offers a "...daily curriculum of exciting, challenging activities for children..."

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Curriculum is inclusive, incorporates teacher inspired ideas, and includes academic based learning strategies (e.g. individualized Handwriting Without Tears, intense kindergarten readiness, Everyday Mathematics, Letter People, A Little Spot of Emotion and Feeling). Curriculum additionally incorporates on-site guest speaker events, themed days, and extra outside enrichments. Management discussed their continued commitment to investing in quality play items with a purpose for learning.

Hand in Hand - Barrington continues to have and update as needed policies and procedures that include those for safety, daily health checks, hand washing, diapering, cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting. Cleaning schedules and reminders were observed to be posted in many areas of the building. On 4/20/2026, management and staff discussed how they continue to help ensure the children's space is sanitary and hazard free each day by following the policies and procedures. Management and staff also talked about having and utilizing continued supports as needed from local school districts, other local businesses, CCR&R, the local CCNC and AEA.

Hand in Hand programs continue to have emergency plans, policies, and procedures in place which are annually reviewed and updated as needed. Hand in Hand sites have successfully navigated through flooding events (2008 historic Linn County flood), 2019 winter Polar Vortex, 2019 health (covid-19) pandemic, 8/10/20 Derecho Storm, 2021 food supply issues, 2022infant formula shortages, air quality alerts (2023, 2025), and repeated technology outages (7/19/24 global technology outage, 10/10/2025 AWS outage, 10/29/2025 Microsoft outage). 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.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

None noted.

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

Not applicable.

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

A full license is issued. Thank you for the visit.

Date: 06/02/2026

HHS Licensing Consultant: Amy Lyons

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**.