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

Name of Center: Apple Kids **Enrollment:** 185 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 19261

Street: 600 10th AVE **City:** Marion Iowa **Zip** 52302 **County:** Linn

Mailing Address: 600 10th AVE, Marion , IA, 52302

Director's Name: Sara Jones-Thomas **Phone Number:** 319-373-3808

On-Site Supervisor(s): Jason Snitko **E-Mail:** applekidsmarionsite@gmail.com

Date(s) of Visit: 01-29-2025

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

LICENSING VISITS

New Application **Re-Application** X **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: 09-13-2024

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	40	43	51	89	223
Summer					0

QRS Rating: N/A

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 10-01-2025 to 10-01-2027
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Amy Lyons **Date:** 03-19-2025

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

Not applicable.

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

Apple Kids has been providing childcare throughout the community since 1995. Apple Kids currently operates the following childcare sites throughout the community: Apple Kids - Marion, Apple Kids - Central City, and Apple Kids - Cedar Rapids. Specifically, Apple Kids - Marion has been in operation since 2009. The program offers full-time and part-time learning experiences to infant through school-age children. Current enrollment is 185.

The Apple Kids multi-site owner is Kendran Sizemore. Ms. Sizemore started as the Director of Apple Kids in 2001 and then became owner in 2009. Ms. Sizemore has a degree in child and family services, over 23 years of experience working with children and continues to participate in much child development related training. While Sara Jones-Thomas has been an Apple Kids director for over 9 years, she's specifically been the Apple Kids - Marion director since April 2021. Ms. Jones-Thomas has a BA degree in health and sports studies, several years experience working in childcare, and continues to participate in much child development related training. Jason Snitko has been an on-site supervisor of this site since April, 2018. Mr. Snitko has a BA in marketing and a teaching credential. Mr. Snitko has over 8 years of experience working with children.

On 1/29/2025, program space was observed.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

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

The year 2025 marks the 30th year (16th year under ownership of Ms. Sizemore) of Apple Kids providing childcare and early learning services to children and their families throughout the community. Congratulations on celebrating 30 years! Specifically, Apple Kids - Marion will be in their 16th year of operations during 2025.

The mission of Apple Kids is "...to provide a safe, nurturing, and fun environment for children ages six weeks to 10 years. Our focus is to provide an encouraging educational experience, promoting social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development. Committed to the families we serve, our goal is to give parents complete peace of mind, while being seen as an excellent example of what a quality childcare center should be..."

Apple Kids has the following website for families and persons in the community to learn more about their childcare programs: www.applekidsmarion.com.

Apple Kids has a history of participating in quality initiatives including local quality initiatives.

Multi-site owner Ms. Sizemore is a local entrepreneur invested in the community. Ownership and management (e.g. Ms. Jones-Thomas, Mr. Snitko) of Apple Kids - Marion is seasoned and consistent. It is very noteworthy that director Ms. Jones-Thomas went above-and-beyond by achieving instructor certification in CPR and First-Aid! The management team is

knowledgeable of licensing guidelines as well as their own program's policies and procedures. The management team is organized and has noteworthy systems of organization in place to help ensure administrative items are completed as required and maintained in a secure manner. As a result, the program experiences smooth daily operations. There is a collaboration that continues among all Apple Kids sites to share materials, curriculum, joys, challenges, and ideas/planning, and floating staff when needed. A bulletin board in the center's administrative area continues to celebrate staff success and the impressive longevity. Apple Kids offers a monetary incentive program, flexible scheduling whenever possible and year-round displays of staff appreciation. Ms. Jones-Thomas discussed the program's core team of staff describing them as "seasoned and good" acknowledging having very low staff turnover. Ms. Jones-Thomas also talked about receiving much positive feedback from families, having consistent full enrollment with a wait list and receiving many family referrals.

Apple Kids - Marion continues efforts at optimal communication between the program/staff and families. The program has organized parent-staff/program information centers, offers regular program newsletters, utilizes technological communication resources, and supports family programming activities. Classroom bulletin boards and enhanced monthly newsletters continue to be uniquely updated to capture family attention. Ms. Jones-Thomas discussed having very supportive families.

Building and grounds are well-maintained. Apple Kids does have a maintenance person assisting with building updates and repairs. Since the last review, the kitchen received a full remodel! In 2024, the building's exterior received a fresh coat of paint completed by CertaPro Professional Painters In 2024, the program also received a garden grant planting 6 fruit trees, establishing a garden on-site and establishing a compost area. Management (e.g. Ms. Jones-Thomas, Mr. Snitko) continues to step into the culinary role to provide food service. Classrooms are arranged in a thoughtful manner with learning at the forefront. Children's accomplishments (e.g. artwork) are displayed in various areas of the program space. Apple Kids - Marion curriculum includes a combination of learning strategies incorporating a play-based approach, teacher inspired ideas, phonics work, math concepts, small and large gross motor, imaginative play experiences, and crafts. Curriculum also incorporates off-site field trip experiences, on-site guest speaker events, themed days, holiday/seasonal parties, parent/teacher conferences, and occasional parent night out events.

Apple Kids - Marion collaborates well with community agencies including the local school districts, early access persons, health professionals, other licensed childcare businesses and various local businesses. Management continues with an intricate plan to be able to successfully transport preschool-age and school-age children to and from multiple local schools.

Apple Kids - Marion has emergency plans, policies, and procedures in place which are annually reviewed and updated as needed. Apple Kids sites have successfully navigated through the 2008 historic Linn County flood, 2019 winter Polar Vortex, 2019 health (covid-19) pandemic, 8/10/20 Derecho Storm, 2021 food supply issues, 2022 infant formula shortages, 2023 air quality alerts and 7/19/24 global technology outage.

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. Infant room has a "no shoes" policy. Apple Kids has policies and procedures in place for hand washing, diapering, cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting. 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 included polar animals. Staff were observed warmly greeting children and families as they arrived for the day. Activities observed were many (e.g. infant cares, circle discussion, center play experiences, small group work, book reading). Children had access to an array of materials (e.g. books, imaginative play options, building materials, crafts, puzzles, sensory items) that encouraged innovative play. Staff provided a companionable presence allowing children to have many choices in their play experiences. Staff were observed communicating with the children verbally, with picture cards, and through sign language. Routine transitions (e.g. clean up activities, food rituals) worked smoothly into the program's welcoming and cooperative play environment. Staff were overheard providing children with meaningful discussion, using positive redirection when needed, and encouraging social graces. 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:

During this reporting period, the local health department conducted extensive lead paint testing at Apple Kids - Marion through the use of portable lead paint analyzer devices, soil sample testing and dust sample testing. Soil and dust sample results tested way below lead hazards. A certified lead safe renovator was also consulted and any possible paint related concerns immediately remedied.

A full license is issued. 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.