Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Hand in Hand-Tower Lane

Provider No.: 34357

Address: 1300 Tower Lane NE, Cedar Rapids, IA, 52402

County: Linn

Director's Name: Kathy Kolthoff

On-Site Supervisor: Jennifer Jandik

Phone Number: 3198321575

E-Mail: hih@handinhandinc.com

HHS Visit Date: 04/03/2026

Licensing Period: 05/01/2025 to 05/01/2027

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 10/10/2024

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

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

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
- [ ] School Age
- [ ] All Ages

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Aged	Capacity
General	27	16	53		96
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 to Hand in Hand - Tower Lane. Hand in Hand - Tower Lane has been in operation since January 2011. Hand in Hand - Tower Lane 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 - Tower Lane license does include a universal preschool provided in collaboration with the Linn Mar School District. Total enrolled and attending children were reported to be 81 on 4/3/2026.

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 Hand in Hand - Tower Lane on-site supervisor is Jennifer Jandik. Ms. Jandik has been the on-site supervisor since November 2019. Ms. Jandik has BA degree in early childhood and special education. Ms. Jandik has been employed by Hand in Hand for several years, has experience working with children and continues to participate in professional development.

On 4/3/2026, program space was observed. Primary programming occurs in age defined classrooms. Program materials are organized in cabinets and on shelves for ease of use. Since the last review, the program was found to have obtained some new items including carpets/rugs and a 2yo room imaginative play kitchen. Sufficient restrooms including hand washing sinks are available to accommodate total capacity. The program has access to age defined outdoor play areas. Since the last monitoring visit, areas of cement and sod were added as well as increased drainage to the outdoor spaces. There is an on-site kitchen where all childcare food is prepared by the center chef. On 4/3/2026, areas of study throughout the building for the month included spring season, Easter, flowers, baby animals, weather and earth day. Activities observed included infant cares, small group work, 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, breakfast rituals, and restroom/drink breaks. Evidence of previous days' learning was displayed throughout the space and included much clever child displays of artwork. 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 4/3/2026, 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 - Tower Lane 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 4/3/2026, Hand in Hand - Tower Lane continues to have a seasoned management team (e.g. Ms. Kolthoff, Ms. Swestka, Ms. Simmons, Ms. Luedeman, Ms. DeDecker, Ms. Jandik). 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 4/3/2026, Hand in Hand - Tower Lane 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. Hand in Hand offers a "...daily curriculum of exciting, challenging activities for children..." 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, extra

outside enrichments and sentimental memory book for families as each child graduates into the next classroom. Management discussed their continued commitment to investing in quality play items with a purpose for learning.

Hand in Hand - Tower Lane 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 4/3/2026, 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, 2022 infant 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

The program's license remains in full status. 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**.