

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

Name of Center: A Step Above Child Care and Learning Center, LLC **Enrollment:** 50 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 50771

Street: 2882 Palo Marsh Rd Suite A **City:** Palo Iowa **Zip** 52324 **County:** Linn

Mailing Address: 2882 Palo Marsh RD Suite A, Palo, IA, 52324

Director's Name: Michelle McKinstry **Phone Number:** 319-851-2671

On-Site Supervisor(s): Michelle McKinstry **E-Mail:** mgreenwalker01@gmail.com

Date(s) of Visit: 05-22-2023

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

Date Inspected: 09-06-2022

Comments :

LICENSE TYPE: X **Child Care** **Preschool (ages 3-5 meets three hours or less per day)**

Financial Type: X **Profit** **Non-Profit** NA

Accreditation: **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:	<u>Year-round</u>	<u>School-Year</u>	<u>Summer Only</u>
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LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Age	Capacity
General	12	12	20	24	68
Summer					0

QRS Rating: N/A

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	FULL license from 08-01-2023 to 08-01-2025
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Amy Lyons

Date: 06-15-2023

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

Not applicable.

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

A Step Above Child Care and Learning Center (ASACCLC) commenced operations on 8/29/2019. The profit program is located in a building adjacent other local businesses. ASACCLC operates year-round, Monday through Friday from 6am to 6pm. The program serves children age infant through school-age. Current enrollment is 50.

ASACCLC founding owner is Michelle McKinstry. Ms. McKinstry is the current director having experience operating her own in-home childcare, having experience working in licensed childcare, and continuing to participate in much child development related training.

On 5/23/2023, program space was observed.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

A Step Above Child Care and Learning Center (ASACCLC) offers a variety of early learning programming and childcare to help meet the needs of children and families in the community. ASACCLC is located in a predominantly rural area and accepts a variety of funding sources. This program commenced operations in October 2019, and during 2023, will be celebrating their 4th year of providing childcare in the community. Congratulations!

ASACCLC sponsors a social media page for enrolled families and current employees.

The philosophy of ASACCLC is "...built around the concept that children are born ready to learn. As caregivers, we strive to create a learning environment that is safe, stimulating and encouraging..."

Ms. McKinstry is a local entrepreneur invested in children and the community. Prior to opening a licensed childcare center, founding owner Michelle McKinstry reported operating an in-home childcare for several years and participating in childcare quality initiatives. Ms. McKinstry is knowledgeable of licensing guidelines as well as her own program's policies and procedures. Ms. McKinstry 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.

Ms. McKinstry acknowledged having several new staff on board helping comprise a solid team of employees who seem to take pride in their work with children and their relationships with each other. Ms. McKinstry discussed having a consistent administrative staff on board who's sole duties are to help ensure files and administrative paperwork items are updated and maintained as required. Ms. McKinstry reported displays of staff appreciation, flexible scheduling whenever possible, and attendance incentives continue to be part of program operations.

ASACCLC has emergency plans, policies, and procedures in place which are annually reviewed and updated as needed. ASACCLC successfully navigated through the 8/10/2020 Derecho Storm and 2019 health (COVID-19) pandemic.

Building and grounds are well-maintained. Center kitchen is spacious, organized, and sanitary. Since the last review, classrooms were rearranged keeping learning at the forefront. Children's accomplishments (e.g. unique artwork, door decoration, Happy to "Sea" You toddler room, welcome rainbows preschool room) are displayed in various areas of the childcare. ASACCLC curriculum includes a combination of learning strategies incorporating Brightwheel concepts, 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 (e.g. Vinton aquatic center, local splash pads, River Museum), on-site guest speakers, themed (e.g. movie day) events, gardening projects (e.g. extensive on-site garden boxes which cultivate fresh vegetable tasting, flower planting, child created bird feeders), and holiday/seasonal parties (e.g. recent Easter Egg decorating). Ms. McKinstry discussed how the program obtained a Farm to Table grant which will allow them to update gardening supplies and increase gardening experiences.

ASACCLC 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.

ASACCLC collaborates well with community partners including the local school districts, local businesses, counseling agencies, CCR&R and health professionals. Ms. McKinstry discussed how she continues to work hard to foster relationships with local school districts in effort to help families with transportation needs. ASACCLA has historically held seasonal outreach events including sponsoring a giving tree for senior residents at two local care centers.

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

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. This program has policies and procedures in place for hand washing, cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting. Staff were able to verbalize and engage in these processes. Cleaning checklists and daily sanitation reminders (many of which were updated since last review) 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 month of May include Cinco de Mayo, Mother's Day, Camping, Zoo, and Memorial Day. Children have access to an array of materials (e.g. books, imaginative play options, building materials, crafts) that encourage innovative play. Activities observed were many (e.g. infant cares, small group crafting, indoor large gross motor balancing taking turns group event, learning play experiences). Staff provided a companionable presence allowing children to have many choices in their play experiences. Routine transitions (e.g. clean up activities) worked smoothly into the program's welcoming and cooperative play environment. Throughout the classrooms, staff were overheard providing children with many words of encouragement and engaging children in much meaningful discussion. Staff communicated with the children verbally, with picture cues, and with sign language. 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:

At the time of the license visit, a few items were noted as needing correction (e.g. thermometers in cooling units, child proofing cabinet repair). It shall be noted that prior to the completion of this report, Ms. McKinstry forwarded written notes 6/14/2023 as to resolution for items discussed.

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.