

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:** 44 **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: 08-16-2024

Licensing Visit X **Unannounced Visit** X **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 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: 09-18-2024

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 44.

ASACCLC founding owner and combined director/on-site supervisor is Michelle McKinstry. Ms. McKinstry has experience operating her own in-home childcare, has experience working in licensed childcare, and continues to participate in child development related training.

On 8/16/2024, 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 2024, will be celebrating their 5th 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. Staff throughout the program rooms reported being employed at A Step Above Child Care and Learning Center for 5 years, 1 year and 5 months. The program has 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.

ASACCLC has emergency plans, policies, and procedures in place which are annually reviewed and updated as needed. ASACCLC successfully navigated through the 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.

Building and grounds are well-maintained. Center kitchen is spacious, organized, and sanitary. Classrooms are arranged to keep learning at the forefront. 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, on-site guest speakers, themed days, gardening projects, and holiday/seasonal parties. In the past, Ms. McKinstry reported applying for and receiving a Farm to Table grant which allowed them to incorporate 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. ASACCLA has historically held seasonal outreach events including sponsoring a giving tree for senior residents at two local care centers.

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, diapering, cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting.

On the day of the monitoring visit, staff were nurturing and attentive to the children's needs. Staff discussed how they were holding a "Movie Day Friday". Children have access to an array of materials (e.g. books, imaginative play options, building materials, crafts) that encourage innovative play. Activities observed included (e.g. infant cares, free play, movie watching). 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 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:

109.6(2): Qualified director or qualified on-site supervisor on-site during the hours of operation or a minimum of six hours of center's hours of operation.

- On the day of the monitoring visit, combined director/on-site supervisor was not present. There was also no qualified on-site supervisor present.

109.9(1)e: All files contain documentation to indicate that ongoing staff training requirements are met.

- One staff file (paper and ipower) reviewed (TM) lacked documentation of required annual professional growth hours.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

Please consider obtaining an infant (birth to 2yo) multi-seat "buggy" to help increase outdoor opportunities for the youngest children.

Prolonged pacifier usage in young children can lead to otitis media, affect dental health, and impact natural speech development. Pacifier usage can also impact classroom sanitation including the transmission of illness particularly if children allowed to walk around with pacifiers (e.g. drop and put back in mouth). When the risks of pacifier use begin to outweigh benefits, consider requiring medical documentation as to need and plan of usage for each child wanting to continue with a pacifier.

The program's license remains in full status. 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.