Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Apple Tree Early Child Center

Provider No.: 51852

Address: 1070 7th AVE NE, Sioux Center, IA, 51250

County: Sioux

Director's Name: Jessica Ver Mulm

On-Site Supervisor: Amanda Schwartz

Phone Number: 7127224336

E-Mail: director.ecc@appletreechildcare.com

HHS Visit Date: 02/06/2026

Licensing Period:

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 06/11/2025

Comments:

Report Visit Type:

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

License Type:

- [X] Full
- [ ] Provisional

Quality initiative:

Quality Rating: 1

- [ ] 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	65	24	75	71	235
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

I completed an unannounced visit at this center on 02/06/25. I was able to speak with Jessica Vermulm who is the director at this Apple Tree Cener. Ms. Vermulm holds a CDA certificate and a Bachelor of Arts degree with a focus on early childhood education. She is currently pursuing her master's degree and brings many years of experience working with children. Her passion for nurturing young learners shines through in everything she does.

Appletree Early Learning Center is located in Sioux Center in a building thoughtfully designed for children's care and learning. The center offers bright, welcoming spaces with four classrooms for ages 2–5, four rooms for infants, and two additional rooms—one for school-age children and one for 4-year-old preschool. Serving children from infancy through school age, Appletree provides a safe, nurturing environment where every child can grow and thrive. The center is open Monday through Friday from 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., making it convenient for families. This facility is locked and is opened by staff to gain entrance. There are 95 children enrolled in this program and 68 present at the time of my visit.

All areas of the center were observed, including classrooms, restrooms, the kitchen, outdoor play spaces, and administrative review.

"The center provides a sufficient amount of toys and equipment for the number of children enrolled. A daily schedule of activities is posted for easy reference. Throughout the rooms, colorful displays feature shapes, colors, a picture schedule for the children, a job chart, children's artwork, and the alphabet. During the visit, staff were observed assisting children with a variety of activities such as building with blocks, reading stories, doing art projects, and engaging in sensory play. They were also seen talking with children throughout the visit, leading group exercises, reminding children of classroom rules, and encouraging participation in learning games. The center follows the High Scope Curriculum, which promotes hands-on

learning and active engagement.

Center Nutrition Practices Observed: Nutritious meals are prepared onsite in a kitchen that is securely inaccessible to children. Refrigerators were clean and maintained at the appropriate temperature, and good food storage practices were observed throughout the kitchen. The center follows CACFP nutrition guidelines to ensure balanced and healthy meals, although they are not currently enrolled in the CACFP program. Menus are posted for families to view and include a variety of appealing options such as fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and protein-rich foods to support children's growth and development.

Tables were sanitized prior to children eating, and both staff and children demonstrated good handwashing procedures. Medication is securely stored in a locked box or kept out of children's reach, and the center follows proper guidelines for administering medication. A fully stocked first aid kit is available to treat minor injuries. Fire and tornado drills are documented monthly, and a radon test has been completed with results within normal levels. Annual heating inspections are up to date, and a functioning carbon monoxide detector is in place. All program areas were observed to be clean, well-maintained, and organized. Staff actively promote safety and hygiene by modeling proper handwashing, discussing safety rules with children, and encouraging healthy habits. The center follows strong health and safety policies and procedures, ensuring a safe and nurturing environment for children.

Monthly playground inspections are completed to ensure equipment is safe and in good condition. Shade is available to protect children during outdoor play. The playground is well-equipped with slides, climbing structures, swings, a playhouse, and tricycles, providing a variety of opportunities for active play and exploration. Outdoor play supports children's physical development, encourages social interaction, and promotes healthy habits through active movement and fresh air. The center does not provide transportation for children

The center uses the PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) method for guiding children's behavior, focusing on positive reinforcement and teaching appropriate social skills. An upcoming training is scheduled for all staff to strengthen their understanding and implementation of PBIS strategies, ensuring consistency and a supportive environment for children. Ms. Vermulm ensures that her staff communicate with one another about

Ms. Vermulm ensures that her staff maintain open communication about classroom behaviors and daily activities. This collaborative approach helps create consistency across classrooms and supports a positive learning environment for all children.

The goal is to continue to work on their IQ4K levels.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

The preschool has parent/teacher conferences two times a year to inform parents of their child's progress

The program is currently participating in Iowa's Quality for Kids (IQ4K) initiative at Level 1. This means the center has met foundational quality standards, including compliance with licensing requirements and initial steps toward continuous improvement in areas such as staff training, family engagement, and curriculum practices. The center is committed to advancing to higher IQ4K levels and continues to work toward enhancing quality in all areas to provide the best possible care and learning environment for children.

Several staff members are involved in the T.E.A.C.H. program and the WAGES program. The T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) program provides scholarships and support for early childhood educators to pursue higher education and professional development. The WAGES program offers financial incentives to early childhood professionals who complete additional training or education. These programs benefit the center by helping staff advance their knowledge and skills, which enhances the quality of care and education provided to children. They also promote staff retention and stability, creating a consistent and nurturing environment for families

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

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

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

Please continue to work with CCRR consultant and enter training into the IPOWER system.

A full license will remain in effect at this time.

At least one visit will be made to the center during the next year.

Date: 02/10/2026

HHS Licensing Consultant: Leann Steinhauer

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**.