

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

Name of Center: Iowa Lakes Head Start **Enrollment:** 15 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 30231

Street: 3200 College Dr **City:** Emmetsburg **Iowa** **Zip** 50536 **County:** Palo Alto

Mailing Address: PO Box 519, Graettinger, IA, 51342

Director's Name: Sarina Smith **Phone Number:** 712-852-5352

On-Site Supervisor(s): Tracy Fischer - Lead Teacher **E-Mail:** ssmith@udmo.com

Date(s) of Visit: 01-09-2025

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: 10-11-2023

Comments :

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

Financial Type: Profit X Non-Profit NA

Accreditation: Accredited X NAEYC NSACA Other NA

Program Serves: Infants (0-23 mo.) 2 Years X Preschool-Age School-Age

Get-Well Evening Care Special Needs

SCHEDULE: Year-round X School-Year Summer Only

HOURS: Year-round School-Year Summer Only

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Age	Capacity
General			32		32
Summer					0

QRS Rating: 2

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

Licensing Consultant: Raymond Salsbury

Date: 01-22-2025

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

NA

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

An unannounced annual visit was made to the Iowa Lakes Head Start program on 01-09-25 where I met lead teacher Tracy Fischer. Tracey is well qualified for the position with a Bachelor's degree and has been the lead teacher of the center since 2016. This program is located in a free standing building on the Iowa Lakes Community College campus behind the main administration office for the college. The program is operated independently of the college and overseen by a separate board of directors. Sarina Smith is the Executive Program Director for this and several other locations and took over that position in 2024. The program provides preschool programming for children 3-4 years of age, and also provides wrap around daycare services to those children that attend the Head Start class but who's parents are unable to pick them up immediately following the end of that program. There are currently 13 children enrolled in the Head Start class and 5 enrolled in the wrap around daycare program. All aspects of the program subject to licensing standards were reviewed though it is noted that the visit took place during the hours of operation for the Head Start classroom programming.

The layout, design, and operation of the classrooms remains the same as in prior reports. The building has two classrooms. One room is used for primary programming of the Head Start class and the other for wrap around daycare programming. Both classrooms have sinks in the room, and restrooms are located in the main Head Start programming room. Both rooms have windows along the exterior walls that provide ample natural light, a view of the outdoors, and ventilation. Each room has a direct exit to the outdoors, and a third door serves as a primary entrance to the building. Both classrooms were observed to be clean and free of any noted safety concerns due to maintenance. Both classrooms have a large open floor plan that is divided into activity centers through the use of low shelves, furniture, and play structures. The equipment in each center was observed to be in good repair and appropriate to the ages of the children attending the program. A copy of the daily schedule and curriculum are posted, and a newsletter is also sent home to inform parents of what the class is working on. The curriculum establishes a general learning theme and specific learning letter, number, color, shape concepts. On the day of the visit the theme and learning concepts were Snow, letter "D", color "Blue", number 3, and shape "Rhombus".

During the visit the teachers did follow the planned schedule and curriculum moving through different activities such as free choice center play, large group learning, large motor skill activity, lunch, and nap. The teachers were engaged with the children throughout the visit both in presenting the planned curriculum, and attending to their needs. As an example during the more child directed center play activities the teachers were playing with the children talking with them about their play and helping them explore their play by asking questions, and allowing the children to direct the actions of the teachers. During this time it was noted that Tracy did an excellent job of splitting her attention between the engagement with the children she was with, and scanning the room as a whole to monitor for the interactions between the other children and any issues that may have arisen. The center does use a positive behavior support approach to managing behavior. This included observed actions of using reminders of expected behavior, recognition and praise of positive behavior, and guided problem solving. With the guided problem solving one of the assistant teachers spoke with a child who was having an issue and talked with the child about probable outcomes of different choices. This was very effective in helping that child make a positive choice and return to playing with their peers.

Good health and safety practices were observed during the visit. The teachers did ensure that the children washed their

hands following restroom use, and prior to meal service. When doing so they did talk with the children about why and how they wash their hands to help the children understand the importance in reducing disease transmission. The center also engaged in other hygiene practices such as having the children brush their teeth following meals, and assisting children with toileting. The center does provide children with a new toothbrush each week as means to help ensure good oral health. There were a couple of children who did need assistance with having had a toileting accident and the teachers did follow good standing diapering procedures. One concern that was noted is that while assisting one child another child was using another stall. The teacher assisting the first child was wearing gloves while cleaning the child and when the peer finished the teacher did give the child a wet-wipe, and congratulatory "high five" but had not removed the gloves before doing so which did increase the risk of disease transmission. Good cleaning practices are in place with the teachers waiting for the children to be out of the area before using chemical cleaners. Chemical cleaners, personal items, and other materials that could pose a safety risk to children are stored in areas where they are not readily accessible to the children. The center has several well stocked first aid kits which are readily identifiable and out of the immediate reach of the children. Response plans for children with health needs were posted where they were readily available but in a manner that protected the child's privacy.

The center has a small kitchen and meals are prepared on-site. Lunch was being prepared when I arrived and good food handling practices were observed with the staff washing their hands before handling food, and wearing food service gloves. Good food storage practices were observed with thermometers in all refrigeration/freezer units, dry pantry items stored in air tight sealable food grade containers, and food items being covered while being held for service. A menu was posted and provided a good variety of healthy meal options. The meal served on the day of my visit included lasagna, pears, corn, and milk. Meals are served family style with the children using measured scoops to serve themselves and the teachers providing assistance as needed. The teachers do sit at the tables and eat with the children to model good eating habits and social interactions.

The center has two playground spaces that are used. One playground has a climbing structure and swings, and the other has a large grassy area and play house. The playground with the climbing structure is the space that is primarily used and the equipment was observed to be in good repair. The playground is fully enclosed by fencing and several of the clips used to attach the fence to the support posts were missing or broken which allowed the fence to flex away from the post and create an entrapment risk. Pea gravel is used for fall surfacing and appeared to have a good depth of material though this could not be fully assessed due to winter freeze approximately 3 inches below the surface. The material will need to be assessed in the spring and aerated or supplemented as need to ensure a depth of 9 inches of loose material. The other playground is also fenced and the fencing appeared to be in good repair. There is a play house and wooden platform structure in this area, and the center also added a geodesic dome climber since the last year. That unit does not have any fall surfacing beneath it and while it can be used as a ground play structure the staff will need to restrict children from climbing on it until such time that there is adequate fall surfacing installed. There are several large mature trees that provide shade in both areas.

All required notices were posted in an area that was readily accessible to parents and visitors. Staff files will be reviewed at a later date at the program administrative offices and any concerns will be addressed at that time. Child files were reviewed and found to contain all required documentation and authorizations with the exception of 5 children that needed a current physical. Documentation was present that parents had been notified of the need to provide a current physical. All inspection logs and certificates were available and current.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

The center participates in the IQ4K program which seeks to exceed licensing standards and implement best practice recommendation. The center is currently rated as a Level 2 center out of a possible 5 level scale of which level 5 is the highest. The program is also accredited by NAEYC.

The center had had some updates since the time of the last visit with equipment for the children such as the geodesic dome climber on the playground, and other equipment such as a new stove for meal preparation.

While visiting with Tracy did identify that the center has seen strong progress in several children that are attending the program which has been noticed by the teachers and families of those children.

IV. IDENTIFY THE ASPECTS OF OPERATION THAT FALL BELOW THE STANDARDS REVIEWED:

109.10(1)b: School-age (for children five years and older and enrolled in school): Annual statement of health status signed by parent is submitted prior to admission, certifies that the child is free of communicable disease, and lists allergies, medications and acute/chronic conditions.

Number not in compliance: 5

109.11(3)a: Center shall ensure that: Facility and premises are sanitary, safe, and hazard free. Adequate indoor and outdoor space is provided. The outdoor area shall include safe play equipment and area of shade. Sufficient space provided for dining. Sufficient lighting shall be provided. Sufficient ventilation. Sufficient heating. sufficient cooling. Sufficient bathroom and diapering facilities. Equipment, including kitchen appliances, are maintained so as not to result in burns, shock, or injury to children. Sanitation and safety procedures for the center are developed and implemented to reduce risk or injury or harm to children and reduce transmission of disease.

-- Missing/broken fence retention clips need to be replaced to ensure that the fence is held tightly to the support posts. The geodesic dome climber shall be restricted from use as a climbing structure until such time that appropriate fall surfacing has been installed as required by the CPSC Public Playground Safety Handbook (<https://www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/325.pdf>).

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

A full license is recommended at this time. Please provide a written response to the licensing consultant identifying a plan of action to correct and maintain those aspects cited as not meeting licensing standards and identifying an anticipated date of compliance. At least one visit will be made to the center during the next year.

*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.