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

Name of Center: Kinderhaus **Enrollment:** 18 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 31014

Street: 701 Iowa AVE **City:** Decorah Iowa **Zip** 52101 **County:** Winneshiek

Mailing Address: PO Box 114, Decorah, IA, 52101

Director's Name: Gracie Platt **Phone Number:** 563-379-7303

On-Site Supervisor(s): Lydia Hayes & Steve McCargar **E-Mail:** gracie@kinderhausdecorah.com

Date(s) of Visit: 10-10-2023

X **Licensing Visit** X **Unannounced Visit** **Off Year Visit** X **Administrative Change**

LICENSING VISITS

New Application X **Re-Application** **NA**

Signed Application (470-0722) Received X **Yes** **No** **NA** **Date Signed:** 09-14-2023

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

Date Inspected: 02-06-2023

Comments : Compliance on 02/16/23

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

Financial Type: Profit X Non-Profit NA

Accredition: Accredited NAEYC NSACA Other X NA

Program Serves: Infants (0-23 mo.) 2 Years X Preschool-Age X 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	0	0	13	2	15
Summer					0

QRS Rating: 1

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 11-01-2023 to 11-01-2025
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Becky Frost **Date:** 10-12-2023

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

N/A

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

On 10/10/23 I made an unannounced licensing visit to Kinderhaus in Decorah. I met with Gracie Platt, the director. Ms. Platt is also the lead teacher for the voluntary statewide four-year-old preschool program this year. Ms. Platt started in August 2018 and she has a MA in Early Childhood Education. Ms. Platt teaches Monday, Wednesday and Friday and she does her administrative duties on Tuesday and Thursday. I also met Lydia Hayes, the on-site supervisor and co-lead teacher for the program. Ms. Hayes works at the program Monday through Friday. She started in August 2021 and she has a BA in elementary education. Steve McCargar is an assistant who works on Thursday and Thursday and he is also an on-site supervisor for the program. He has been with the program since August 2010. Tamie Holzer and Paige Darnell are additional staff members. Ms. Holzer works Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoon and Ms. Darnell works Tuesday and Thursday afternoon. Kristin Albertson, a long time staff member, is a sub this year.

Kinderhaus is in Good Shepherd Church, but it is not affiliated with the church. The program was started by a group of parents who were looking for an alternative to preschool. The Kinderhaus program is based on the Waldorf educational model, as well as the European outdoor model of education. The Waldorf philosophy grew out of Germany in 1919. Its focus is to preserve the essence of childhood. They use imagination and play and strive not to over intellectualize the child. A good portion of each session is spent outdoors with opportunities to explore and learn in an outdoor setting. The program promotes a strong sense of community, reverence and respect, art, song, movement and oral storytelling. Math and academics are woven into storytelling. There is a bridge between preschool and home so the preschool has an extended family feeling. The emphasis is on natural and unformed toys so the children use their imaginations.

The primary program operates Monday through Friday from 8:45 am until 3:15 pm. Parents have the option of a half-day that operates from 8:45 am until 12:15 pm or parents can utilize the extended day program that operates until 3:15 pm. The program provides extended care so children can arrive as early as 7:45 am and stay until 4:15 pm. The program partners with the Decorah School district to provide the voluntary four-year-old preschool program. Ms. Platt is the lead teacher for the voluntary preschool program. Parents can choose to send their children two days, three days or five days. There are 18 children enrolled, but they are limited to 15 children each day. The program serves children ages three through six-years-old.

As mentioned earlier, the program primarily operates outside, but they also have a room in the church. The inside classroom is only used if weather or another cause does not permit them to be outside. Windows provide natural lighting. Centers were arranged in a manner that allowed easy movement between activities, but it also allowed for clear supervision by staff members. Materials were in good condition. The materials are located at child level so they were easily accessible to the children.

The outside program area is naturalistic. It is fenced in using bamboo branches. There is an area of dirt the children can shovel in and use water to turn into mud. There is a sandbox, a small toys center (blocks, cars, hammers and nails), a digging hole/discovery center (shovels, rakes, magnifying glasses, nature items), reading and quiet activities (books, braiding, painting), gross motor center (wagons, horsey reigns, bags, balls, jump ropes, hula hoops), music center, art center, imaginative play center (dolls, dramatic play items), a logs and obstacle course center (logs, stumps, rocks) manipulatives

(beading and lacing) and library. There is a garden area the children help care for. There is a grassy area for circle time. Trees and two tarps are available for shade.

There was a phone with emergency numbers posted inside. Staff members also carry a track phone while outside and communicate with two-way radios. Emergency fire and tornado procedures and evacuation diagrams were posted by the main program door and outdoor exits inside the indoor classroom. A daily schedule was posted and lesson plans were available for review.

There are two sinks in the classroom and procedures were posted. There is a bathroom in the hallway. It has one toilet and one sink. Handwashing procedures were posted. There are additional bathrooms in the church the children can use if necessary. Cots are used to nap for the children who utilize the extended day program.

For the voluntary four-year-old preschool program the teachers use the Creative Curriculum and Waldorf philosophy to create lesson plans. Lesson plans are prepared jointly by all teachers. Activities are based on themes. The length of the theme is determined by the interest level of the children. Themes are typically adapted around the season. Ms. Platt and Ms. Hayes will complete Creative Curriculum GOLD assessments on each child. The program participates in the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards (QPPS) as part of the voluntary preschool program.

Teachers makes home visits for each family participating in the four-year-old grant program prior to the beginning of the school year.

I reviewed documentation of monthly fire and tornado drills. I reviewed documentation of outdoor classroom inspections. A radon test was completed in September 2023 and is good for two years. Results were within EPA guidelines. The church is completely geothermal so fuel burning inspections are not necessary. A carbon monoxide detector is on site and is in the classroom. Outlets were protected. The fire marshal inspection occurred on 02/06/23 with compliance on 02/16/23.

The center is not on the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) but follows the guidelines. The center provides the snack. Parents pay a snack fee twice each year (September and January) to assist with the expense of providing the children with all-natural, primarily organic, homemade snacks. The Waldorf philosophy believes in rhythm and consistency. There is a snack assigned to each day of the week and the snack calendar remains the same all year. The snack menu was posted. The children who stay for the extended day program bring their own lunches. They are checked to make sure the CACFP guidelines are followed.

The children eat snack and lunch in the inside classroom. There is water available to the children outside throughout the day.

The center uses Hydrogen Peroxide to sanitize the food tables.

Dishes are washed using a dishwasher in the church kitchen. There is a refrigerator and thermometers were present. Snacks are made fresh each morning. Food items are stored according to NHSPS guidelines.

The parent information is located on a bulletin board inside the entrance near the indoors classroom. The mandatory reporter, childcare consultant and the handbook availability were posted. The license was conspicuously hung. A no-smoking sign was posted at the entrance.

Staff and children files were reviewed at the time of the licensing visit. I reviewed six children files. There was one outdated physical and one missing physical. Ms. Platt has been in contact with both parents to get the physicals so this will not be cited. There is one missing immunization certificates and there are two invalid immunization certificates. One was not signed by medical personnel and one was not on the mandated Iowa Department of Health certificate. I advised Ms. Platt to contact the childcare nurse consultant to help correct these.

I reviewed two staff files. They were in great condition.

I reviewed policy and procedures, staff and parent handbooks. The necessary written emergency procedures and policies were present. Emergency Preparedness Plans have been completed.

Staff members had great teamwork. Staff members greeted parents and children as they arrived for the day. Staff members show a lot of enthusiasm and it is obvious how much each of them is invested in the program. I observed Mr. McCarger giving the children “train” rides in a wagon. He was pulling them around the area and making train horn sounds and pretending to avoid obstacles on the tracks. All the staff members sing as they interact with the children or move to different activities. He was also playing “Cookie Monster” with the children. He was chasing them around acting like they were cookies. Staff members encouraged the children to use their imaginations and offered them choices. They were great at pulling children into activities when they were off by themselves. They were flexible and provide a positive, fun learning environment. Circle time is calming. They talk with the children about listening for birds and other sounds in nature. They

sing and talk in soft voices. They include everyone in circle time by greeting them. They also worked on breathing exercises and sent warm wishes to everyone in the world. It was enjoyable to watch.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

The program is flexible for parents. Ms. Platt states they try to be flexible because they realize families have different needs and wants.

Ms. Platt states she loves the play-based aspect of the program. She states they provide an opportunity for lots of children with different needs. She states they attract children who do not fit in the mode of some traditional settings.

Ms. Platt states they spend a lot of time outside and she believes the emphasis they place on outdoor activity and imaginative play is beneficial. They do not put all their emphasis on academics. They take walks every Tuesday and Thursday to the river where they roll down the hills, play in the woods, climb trees and throw sticks in the water.

Ms. Platt states they provide a unique learning opportunity to children. She states you will not find many outdoor learning environments in the state. Several staff members mentioned they wished there were more programs like theirs in the state. The program promotes the mental, emotional and physical development of the children through outside play.

The program the families can receive financial assistance through HAWC (state funding for income qualifying three-year-olds), Child Care Assistance or a KinderGrant (an in-house grant for qualifying families).

Ms. Platt states they will make referrals to Keystone AEA if necessary. They want children to have the support they need when they move to their traditional school. An AEA representative meets with them monthly to talk with them and see if they have identified any concerns.

The program has an IQ4K level of 1 that expires in May 2025.

The teachers have longevity with the program and they are dedicated to the program and the children they serve.

Ms. Platt states they bring in literacy and numeracy to the classrooms in a special way. They use nature to discuss shapes and numbers. The program provides a unique learning environment.

The program provides healthy and organic snacks.

The program partners with the Decorah Community School District to provide the voluntary preschool program for the children. The program participates in the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards (QPPS) as part of the voluntary preschool program.

The Kinderhaus program uses the Waldorf philosophy and provides another alternative for parents seeking a preschool for their children. The emphasis on the outdoors and nature as a learning environment provides excellent opportunities for learning. The children discover something new every day and the children love to explore. This creates great discussions with the children.

The families of Kinderhaus participate in a “Spirit of Light” festival as winter approaches and participate in a spring festival at the end of the school year.

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

109.9(3): Signed and dated Iowa immunization certificates are on file for each child enrolled.
Number missing: 1
Number invalid: 2
There is one missing immunization certificates and there are two invalid immunization certificates. One was not signed by medical personnel and one was not on the mandated Iowa Department of Health certificate. I advised Ms. Platt to contact the childcare nurse consultant to help correct these.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

A full license is issued. All DHS licensing standards and procedures must be maintained during the renewal period.

An administrative change is being made to increase the hours of operation to 7:45 am until 4:15 pm.

*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.