Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Early Beginnings Atkins Inc

Provider No.: 39552

Address: 402 Cardinal AVE, Atkins, IA, 52206

County: Benton

Director's Name: Bree Hepker

On-Site Supervisor: Molly Stark

Phone Number: 3194466060

E-Mail: earlybeginningsa@gmail.com

HHS Visit Date: 07/14/2026

Licensing Period: 09/01/2026 to 09/01/2028

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 07/08/2026

Comments:

Report Visit Type:

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

License Type:

- [X] Full
- [ ] Provisional

Quality initiative:

- [ ] Accrediation

Program Duration:

- [X] Year-Round
- [ ] School Year
- [ ] Summer Only

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HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*
Sunday			
Monday	6:45 AM to 5:45 PM		
Tuesday	6:45 AM to 5:45 PM		
Wednesday	6:45 AM to 5:45 PM		
Thursday	6:45 AM to 5:45 PM		
Friday	6:45 AM to 5:45 PM		
Saturday			

Program Population Served:

- [ ] Infant(0-<24 Months)
- [ ] Toddler
- [ ] PreSchool
- [ ] School Age
- [X] All Ages

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Aged	Capacity
General	24	16	40	45	125
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

Early Beginnings operates multiple licensed child programs Benton County. Specifically, this license visit and report pertain to Early Beginnings Atkins Inc. Early Beginnings Atkins Inc is a profit program which commenced operations in 2000. This program offers year-round licensed childcare M-F 6:45am-5:45pm and serves children age infant through school-age. Total enrolled and attending children were reported to be 98 on 7/14/2026.

Founding multi-site owner and multi-site director is Bree Hepker. Ms. Hepker has an AA degree in Early Childhood Education, has experience working with children, and participates in professional development. Site specific on-site supervisor (OSS) is Molly Stark. Ms. Stark has an AA Degree in Business Management, has experience working with children and participates in professional development.

On 7/14/2026, program space was observed. Primary programming occurs in age defined classrooms. There are restrooms and handwashing sinks to accommodate capacity. The program has access to age defined outdoor play areas. All foods are stored and prepared in the on-site center kitchen. The center chef has in the past completed ServSafe training. On 7/14/2026, areas of study for the month included USA, "red, white and blue", World Wonders, and Traveling. It was also noted that the month's social focus was "accepting criticism". Evidence of previous days' learning included nicely displayed child artwork throughout the center (e.g. milestone "Follow me to the Beach", Clever Leaning Tower of Pisa project!). Activities observed were many and included infant cares, large group discussion, center play exploration, and outdoor large gross motor play. Extremely noteworthy was how the school-age children went outdoors to play and began searching the center's Milkweed plants. The children's squeals of delight could be heard as they discovered two Monarch Caterpillars sunbathing and snacking among their Milkweed! Great discussion of how to safely move them to an area for closer observation in the days ahead as they metamorphized. The children agreed on names of Calli and Donald for the pair.

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During the monitoring visit, routine transitions were observed to go smoothly and included clean-up procedures, lunchtime rituals, restroom/drink breaks and nap/quiet rest procedures. Curriculum allowed for a variety of experiences that were observed to pique child interest as well as build cognitive skills, strengthen emotional intelligence, enhance physical coordination, and encourage the use of social graces. On 7/14/2026, staff were observed to be in ratio, utilizing positive behavior interventions when needed and engaged in programming with the children. Children appeared comfortable with staff and to be truly enjoying the day.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

The goal of Early Beginnings licensed childcare programs "... is to provide the highest quality care to your child every day. We will do this be providing developmentally appropriate activities in a safe and nurturing environment..."

Early Beginnings Atkins Inc has a private social media page to help increase communication between the program and families.

Multi-site owner and multi-site director Ms. Hepker is a local entrepreneur invested in the community. The program's management team (e.g. Ms. Hepker, Ms. Stark) are childcare mentors having established relationships with other childcare management/directors. As of 7/14/2026, the seasoned management team continues to be very knowledgeable of licensing guidelines as well as her own program's policies and procedures. The management team 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. Ms. Hepker and Ms. Stark both obtained and have the National Administrator Credential (NAC). Management discussed how some staff participate in the Teach and Wages programs. Many staff throughout the classrooms are also seasoned and reported celebrating several years of employment with this childcare. Ms. Hepker and Ms. Stark talked about having an exceptional team of staff including returning summer staff. It shall be noted - Ms. Trudy has and Ms. Kathy is soon retiring! Congratulations to you both! Thank you for your years of service in early childhood!

As of 7/14/2026, Early Beginnings Atkins Inc was again found to be maintaining the required postings, maintaining a family program information area, utilizing technological communication resources, and offering family programming activities. Curriculum includes a combination of learning strategies including teacher inspired ideas that focus on kindergarten readiness while providing experiences in fine and gross motor skills, social/emotional skills, language/literacy learning and math/science exploration. Curriculum also incorporates added enrichments of field trips, guest speakers, crafts, themed days, and seasonal-holiday parties.

Early Beginnings Atkins Inc continues to have and update as needed policies and procedures that include those for safety, daily child contact, hand washing, diaper changing, cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting. On the day of this monitoring visit, staff and management were able to verbalize how they help ensure the children's space is sanitary and hazard free each day by following their current policies and procedures as well as maintaining checklists for cleaning and maintenance. Cleaning checklists and reminder notes were also observed in various areas on-site. On 7/14/2026, management discussed how there is continued support from community partners and local entities-businesses regarding building and grounds conditions and repairs.

Early Beginnings licensed childcare locations including Early Beginnings Atkins Inc each have emergency plans, policies, and procedures. These programs have successfully navigated through flooding events, relocation situations, 2019 winter Polar Vortex, 2019 health (covid-19) pandemic, 8/10/20 Derecho Storm, 2021 food supply issues, 2022 infant formula shortages, air quality alerts (2023, 2025, 2026), technology outages (7/19/24 global technology outage, 10/10/2025 AWS outage, 10/29/2025 Microsoft outage) and 2026 nationwide cyclosporiasis outbreak.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

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

Not applicable.

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

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To provide relief for those on the center's waitlist, considerations are being made to convert the large gross motor room into a classroom in order to increase capacity. Discussions included obtaining necessary furnishings and child materials to meet the needs of an additional group of children. This includes child sized tables with chairs, rugs, diapering station with nonporous diapering surface, child sized shelves, home living play set, and so on.

Any classroom carpets/rugs showing ware shall be replaced.

Any diapering surfaces that are showing ware shall be replaced. Diapering surfaces shall be non-porous to allow for proper cleaning and disinfecting between each diaper change.

For staff to take a group of infants and/or a child(ren) with limited mobility on walking field trips, please obtain a multi-seat infant commercial stroller and an inclusive adaptive stroller.

Replace any room cabinets starting to show ware.

Continue to improve health and sanitation by installing hands-free sensor faucets at all sinks that do not already have this feature.

Install door finger pinch guards on all doors to help prevent child finger pinching-laceration hazards.

To help with the items noted in this section of the report, when any become available, please apply for grant opportunities including the "Growing Iowa" fund (https://www.iowaccrr.org/child-care-providers/iowa-child-care-funding-opportunities/) designed to support childcare in Iowa by connecting with CCR&R.

Targeted Assessment: Behavior Management
Licensing discussed with management oversight of behavior management related to helping childcare staff: 1) understand expectations, 2) manage frustrations, and 3) monitor performance. Management discussed how they are present in the center talking with staff, stepping into rooms with elevated noise levels, scheduling extra staff whenever possible, ensuring staff have breaks, logging child behaviors to identify possible patterns, separating into small groups when possible, offering review of policies at staff meetings, establishing child specific behavior plans, communicating with families, completing written incident reports and exercising required polices for enrollment and discharge of children as needed. Management talked about how staff have orientation and on-going professional development opportunities focusing on behavior strategies and PBIS. Management also discussed how they established a written challenging behavior policy.

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

Date: 08/07/2026

HHS Licensing Consultant: Amy Lyons

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**.