Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Redeemer Lutheran Preschool & Day Care

Provider No.: 22048

Address: 301 S Main ST, Ventura, IA, 50482

County: Cerro Gordo

Director's Name: Kari Johnson Markla

On-Site Supervisor: Sandy Watson

Phone Number: 6418293615

E-Mail: psdc98@gmail.com

HHS Visit Date: 04/06/2026

Licensing Period: 06/01/2026 to 06/01/2028

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 03/05/2024

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	5:30 AM to 6:00 PM		
Tuesday	5:30 AM to 6:00 PM		
Wednesday	5:30 AM to 6:00 PM		
Thursday	5:30 AM to 6:00 PM		
Friday	5:30 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	26		111	23	160
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

An unannounced annual visit was made to the Redeemer Lutheran Preschool & Daycare on on 04-06-26 where I met with center director Kari Markla, and on-site supervisor Sandy Watson. Both are well qualified for the positions they hold with extensive experience and training in early childhood care. The program operates on a campus model with utilizing several classrooms in a building that was previously an elementary school located directly across the street from the main programming location at the Redeemer Lutheran Church in Ventura. Kari acts as the overall director but primarily oversees the operations of the preschool and school age programming at the school location. Sandy oversees the operation of the of the church location serving the infants, toddlers, and 3 year old children. The center is operated as a non-profit program overseen by a board of directors from the church. The center offers full range daycare programming to infants through school age children, and formal preschool programming during the school year. The formal preschool program operates in 4 sessions with an AM & PM class on MWF for 4 year old children, and an AM and PM class on TTH for 3 year old children. The program currently has 111 children enrolled between the two locations and all of the offered programming. There are currently 31 teachers employed by the center. All aspects of the program subject to licensing standards were reviewed.

As noted the program is housed in two buildings and the general design and layout of the buildings and rooms remains the same as in past reports. The daycare programming provided in the original location of the Redeemer Lutheran Church makes use of classrooms on two levels. The general layout and design remain the same as in prior visits. The lower level has an infant room which the center is now using for younger infants, having moved the older infants to the upper level due to higher numbers of the older infants. The rest of the lower level is a larger area for 2-3 year old children. The space for the 2-3 year old children is divided by a mobile fence system into an area with tables for meal service and table based activities, and a primary programming area with activity centers. One issue that was noted with the mobile barrier was staff

stepping over the divider which increases the risk of tripping and falling, or dropping an item on a child. The center either needs to create a gate system that can be easily opened or ensure that staff move the barrier when transitioning between each side. Restroom facilities and changing stations are located outside the main programming spaces and children are escorted to the bathroom when needed. There are several entrances to the space including the main entry, a doorway that provides direct access to the outdoors, and a secondary exit providing access to the upper level. The upper level has two classrooms for infants, and another room that is available as additional programming space for the preschool children if needed. Only one of the infant rooms was being used at this time The two infant rooms have a secondary exit providing direct access to the outdoors. Restroom facilities are located off a main access hallway. Windows along the exterior walls provide natural light, ventilation, and a view of the outdoors on the upper level. The windows of the lower level are located along the upper edge of the wall and so do not provide much of a view. Each room of both levels are divided into activity centers through the placement of furniture and play structures that are arranged so as not to create any blind areas.

The other building also remains the same and continues to makes use of the 4 programming classrooms, 2 nap rooms, kitchen, gymnasium, and library. The two formal preschool classrooms are connected by a small pass-through entry coat area that provides direct secondary egress to the outdoors and the playground area. The classrooms are divided by age, and use intent with one for the 4 year old preschool and the other for the 3 year old preschool. School age programming is located in two classrooms across the hallway from the preschool rooms, and as noted the other two classrooms are used for napping where cots are arranged and kept out at all times. Each classroom in this building has a traditional school room design of a large open area with windows located along the exterior walls to provide natural light, a view of the outdoors, and ventilation. Each room has sinks located in the room to facilitate hand washing. The two preschool rooms have toilets directly accessible from the classroom, and additional toilets are located off the main corridor.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

Interactions during the visit was noted to be improved from the prior report where staff engagement was noted to be mixed. During this visit all staff were observed to present a positive attitude. All were engaged with the children and while some more physically actively engaged all were observed to be either presenting the planned curriculum activities, or were attending to direct care needs. All staff spoke with the children in calm tones using positive and encouraging word choices when speaking to the children. Another difference that was noted with the more engaged interactions was with the 2-3 year old classroom at the church location where the teachers split the group with taking the older children to the activity room on the upper level. This was very effective not only in reducing the stimulation of the group as a whole as the children were not competing for space, attention, and materials, but also helped to improve the implementation of curriculum activities. With regard to supervision one issue that was observed with the school age children was when the children were transitioning from the to the library. During that time several children stopped to use the restroom while the teacher and the rest off the class continued to the library area. While these were school age children, and there was a teacher from another class supervising the children from her room that were using the restroom this did create an increased potential for supervision issues. Licensing does require that staff provide close and careful supervision which is interpreted as within direct line of sight and sound, and knowing the children for whom they are responsible. Developing a process whereby the teachers communicate the exchange of custody even for the brief period of restroom use, and positioning so that they can ensure that children are within direct line of sight can help to reduce the risk of concerns such as children eloping from the center, or staff being able to provide assistance if needed. Ratio was maintained as required by age group with many of the classrooms having 2 staff present.

Good health and safety practices were generally observed on the day of the visit though some issues were noted. I was able to observe diaper changes while at the center and during one change the staff did not deglove between handling soiled and clean items, did not use a wipe on the child, did not wash the infant's hands, and held an infant while using chemical cleaners on the changing station. While in the classroom the lead teacher did note that employee was very recent new hire that was still learning the procedure. While it is understood that a new employee may have difficulty with following all of the required procedures it was also noted that the lead teacher was not observing and providing guidance or reminders either. While pairing new staff with experienced staff is a common practice the center does need to ensure that experienced staff are being active in their roll as mentors. Changing pads were observed to have tears in the waterproof covers and need to be replaced. Chemical cleaners, medications, and personal belongings that could pose a safety risk to children were stored in areas where they were not accessible to children. One medication issue that was noted was an epi-pen that was present for a child at the church location that was no longer attending that location but which had transitioned to the school building location. The epi-pen needs to be moved so that it is readily accessible if needed for that child. Safe sleep practices also need to be reviewed for those infants under 1 year of age. During the visit one infant was observed to be

placed in the crib on their stomach, and another was observed to be left sleeping in a swing. Those issues were reviewed with staff who noted that the child that had been placed on their stomach does roll on their own, and generally does so when sleeping. It was discussed that while that may be the case and the child would not need to be repositioned if they do roll on their own they should still be placed in the crib on their back. It was also discussed that if an infant falls asleep on the floor, while being held, or in a piece of equipment they should be monitored and then moved to a crib as soon as staff have a reasonable opportunity to do so. Good feeding positioning was observed for infants with children being held in an upright position not only for those under 6 months of age as required but for all infants. First aid kits are maintained at both locations and contain materials necessary to address most common first aid needs but these do need to be replenished. Good hand washing practices were observed during the time of my visit for both staff and children. With the exception of the diaper change that was noted staff did ensure that children washed their hands following restroom use, before meals, and other times as required and that they did so in an effective manner. The toys and materials in the classrooms were generally appropriate to the ages of the children present with only one or two items that could pose a choking risk present in classrooms serving children under 3 years of age which were removed when they were pointed out. The center did have a caterpillar crawling tunnel present in the younger preschool classroom but during the visit the staff were allowing the children to climb on top of the structure. This made it a climbing structure by default which had no fall surfacing and insufficient fall zones which would be required if used as an outdoor climbing structure. The center will need to read and follow the manufacturer directions for use regarding whether it is intended for climbing and safety requirements for use as such.

Playground facilities are located at both locations with a more traditional school playground at the school site that contains some climbing structures and swings that were left by the elementary school. The playground at the church location has a commercial grade climbing structure that was installed in 2024 which makes use of a unitary pour in place fall surfacing. Other climbing equipment was removed and the rubber tiles used for fall surfacing were left in place. Shade is provided by mature trees along the edge of the playground. The space if fully enclosed by chain link fencing which was in good repair. There is a constructed dramatic play/storage house that was damaged during a recent storm event. It was reviewed that the playground should not be used until such time that structure was removed. With the school location the center has installed a new commercial climbing structure and other equipment which again makes use of a unitary pour in place fall surfacing for the preschool age children. That playground is fully enclosed by fencing which was in good repair. The older playground space and equipment left by the school includes large climbing and slide structures, and swings which use pea gravel for fall surfacing. The pea gravel has developed a hard pan layer in high traffic areas and needs to be aerated or supplemented to ensure a proper depth of material. Use of climbing structures where the fall surfacing insufficient need to be restricted from use until such time that the fall surfacing is aerated or supplemented. The equipment was observed to be in good repair. The playground also has a large open grassy area, and a paved area where the children can play. In addition to the playground the center has access to an indoor gymnasium space which also serves as the cafeteria area.

The center has a full kitchen located in both buildings where meals are prepared for that location. Both kitchens were observed to be clean. Good food storage and handling practices were observed in both locations. I was able to observe the snack and lunch service at both locations between the visits. The staff did wear food service gloves, and used measured scoops when plating food for the children. While the teachers did not eat with the children supervision was provided at the tables. The center uses a menu rotation for both locations and the menus do identify a good variety of nutritious meal and snack options.

In reviewing required postings a copy of the License Certificate, No Smoking, Consultant Contact, and Mandatory Abuse Reporting were present. The consultant contact information was outdated and new posting was sent to the center. In addition while copies of the notices were present at the school location these were in the preschool programming classroom. While this was acceptable when the building housed other programs these do need to be moved to the main entrance now that the daycare is sole owner and occupant of the building. Other required postings for emergency evacuation, emergency numbers, diapering, hand washing, disease exposure, curriculum, daily schedule, and menu were also present. The center makes use of both a computer based information management system, (Brightwheel), and hard copy files. A selection of random files were reviewed for both staff and children during the visit. In reviewing children's files most did have a current physical, but some did not have response plans for all identified allergies. The center did have plans for food allergies but licensing requires response plans for all significant health concerns and allergies. In reviewing staff files a random sample of 25% were reviewed and of those half were missing current Iowa SING and/or FBI background checks, physicals, and documentation of on-going training. It was reported that the center had information that was in a folder to be filed and while some of the missing documentation was located, others were not. In reviewing inspection logs and certificates all were available and current. Fire and Tornado drills were not conducted/documented for June, July, Aug, Nov, Dec 2025, and March 2026. As a reminder both drills must be conducted and documentation maintained for both fire and tornado

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drills each month for each location. The parent handbook was reviewed and sever required written policies had not been brough forward in the most recent revision.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

109.4(1): Written policies on: Enrollment and discharge. Field trips and non-center activities. Discipline/Behavior/Biting. Nutrition. Health and safety policies. Transportation if applicable. Assurance people do not have unauthorized access to children at the center. Protecting children's confidentiality.
-- Written policies were missing and/or needed to be expanded to include Transportation, Health & Safety (immunization exemption notice, response plans), and Incident Reporting.

109.6(4)c: Center repeats Iowa record checks at a minimum of every two years or when aware of additional child abuse or criminal history that occurs.
-- Documentation was missing or could not be located for several staff. While it was reported to have been completed documentation must be maintained so that it can be readily verified.

109.6(4)d: Center repeats national criminal history checks at a minimum of every four years or when aware of additional history that occurs.
-- Documentation was missing or could not be located for several staff. While it was reported to have been completed documentation must be maintained so that it can be readily verified.

109.7(1): All staff (within first three months of employment):Iowa's training for the mandatory reporting of child abuse.At least one hour of training regarding universal precautions.Certification in First Aid infant, child, and adult cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) or equivalent certification approved by the Department. A valid certificate indicating the date of training and expiration date shall be maintained.Certification in infant, child, and adult first aid that uses a nationally recognized curriculum or is received from a nationally recognized training organization including the American Red Cross, American Heart Association, American Safety and Health Institute, or MEDIC First Aid or an equivalent certification approved by the Department. A valid certificate indicating the date of training and expiration date shall be maintained.Minimum health and safety trainings, (Essentials) approved by the Department. If significant changes occur to content, the Department may require the training be renewed.
-- Documentation was missing or could not be located for several staff. While it was reported to have been completed documentation must be maintained so that it can be readily verified.

109.10(13)b: Emergency instructions, phone numbers, and diagrams for fire, tornado, and flood shall be visibly posted and documented at least once a month for fire and tornado. Records shall be maintained for current and previous year.
-- Emergency drills were not conducted or documented for several months in 2025, and March of 2026. -- NOTE 2ND YEAR CITED

109.11(3)a: Center shall ensure that:Facility and premises are sanitary, safe, and hazard free.Sufficient lighting shall be provided.Sufficient ventilation.Sufficient heating.Sufficient cooling.Equipment placed in the program area is maintained so as not to result in injury to the children.
-- Changing pads with tears in the covers need to be replaced. Staff either need to restrict children from climbing on equipment such as the indoor crawling tunnel or ensure that sufficient fall surfacing is present.

109.11(4)a: Center must have safe outdoor program area adjacent to the center, with sufficient square footage to accommodate at least 30 percent of the enrollment capacity at any one time at 75 spear feet per child. Outdoor space must:Be free from litter and unsafe materials and free from contamination by the drainage or ponding of sewage or storm water.Include safe play equipment and an area of shade.Include fencing to protect from bodies of water or vehicular traffic.
-- The constructed dramatic play/storage building which suffered damage during a recent storm event needs to be removed from the church location playground. The pea gravel used for fall surfacing at the school location has developed a hardpan layer and needs to be aerated or supplemented to ensure a proper depth of loose material as required by the CPSC Public Playground Safety Handbook.

109.12(4)b: Each infant and toddler shall be diapered in a sanitary manner as frequently as needed at a central diapering area. Diapering, sanitation, and hand-washing procedures shall be posted and implemented in every diapering area. There shall be at least one changing table for every 15 infants.

-- One infant was observed to not be properly diapered with staff not degloving between soiled and clean items, not using a wipe, not washing the infant's hands, and holding the infant while using chemical cleaners.

109.12(4)e: The provider shall follow safe sleep practices for infants under one year of age:Infants shall always be placed on their backs for sleep.Infants shall be placed on a firm mattress with a tight fitted sheet.Infants shall not be allowed to sleep on a bed, sofa, air mattress or other soft surface.No child shall be allowed to sleep in any item not designed for infant sleeping, including but not limited to an infant seat, car seat, swing, or bouncy seat.No toys, soft objects, stuffed animals, pillows, bumper pads, blankets, or loose bedding shall be allowed in the sleeping area with the infant.No co-sleeping shall be allowed.Sleeping infants shall be actively observed by sight and sound.If an alternate sleeping position is needed, a signed physician or physician assistant authorization with statement of medical reason is required and an expiration date.
-- One infant was observed to be place in a crib on their stomach. One infant was observed to be left sleeping in a swing.

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

Requirements for safe sleep, and diapering were discussed during the visit both with the staff present, and with the site director, Sandy who confirmed that additional training would be provided to staff as needed.

It was reviewed that the playground space for the church location should not be used until the damaged structure was removed. It was also reviewed that children needed to be restricted from using climbing structures where fall surfacing was insufficient.

It was discussed that the center either needed to ensure that children used the crawling tunnel as a non-climbing structure, or ensured that it was installed as required by the manufacturer if intending to use it as a climbing structure

A form was sent to the center to verify all required documentation was present for all staff. The center will also need to provide a plan to ensure that fire and tornado drills are completed and documented each month for both locations as required. Verification of these elements is required to be provided by 05-15-26

5. 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 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.

6. ADDENDUMS:

- Addendum1: Documentation of staff background checks, and training was received on 05-15-26.

This Addendum is approved by supervisor on 5/22/2026 3:37:17 PM

Date: 04/25/2026

HHS Licensing Consultant: Ray Salsbury

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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**.