Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Kessel Kids Child Care & Learning Center

Provider No.: 19073

Address: 1135 Canterbury ST, Cresco, IA, 52136

County: Howard

Director's Name: Melissa Vobr

On-Site Supervisor: Melissa Vobr

Phone Number: 5635473006

E-Mail: kesselkids@iowatelecom.net

HHS Visit Date: 01/23/2025

Licensing Period: 03/01/2025 to 03/01/2027

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 12/06/2024

Comments:

Report Visit Type:

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

License Type:

- [X] Full
- [ ] Provisional

Quality initiative:

Quality Rating: 2

- [ ] Accrediation

Program Duration:

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

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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	44	16	63	30	153
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

On 01/23/25 I made an unannounced licensing visit to Kessel Kids Child Care and Learning Center in Cresco. I met with Melissa Vobr, the director. Ms. Vobr has been the director since 2008. She has a BA in psychology and business administration. She was an assistant director for two years at the center prior to becoming the director. Ms. Vobr has received her National Administrator Credential (NAC). She is also a NAEYC member. Karen Skretta is an office assistant and is in charge when Ms. Vobr is away from the center. Grace Hunholz is an additional office assistant. There are 61 staff members employed at the center.

Kessel Kids Child Care and Learning Center operates out of a free-standing building. The program operates Monday through Friday from 5:00 am until 6:00 pm. They care for infants through school-aged children. The childcare program started in 1993 and they moved to their current location in June 2008. The building was a partnership between the Howard-Winneshiek School District, Head Start, HAWC and Keystone AEA. There are currently 209 children enrolled.

The center operates out of the following rooms: two infant rooms (one for mobile and non-mobile children), a room for younger one-year-old children, a room for older one-year-old and younger two-year-old children; a room for two-year-old children, a room for older two-year-old children and three-year-old children, a room for four and five-year-old children, and a school-aged room. An inspection of each room was completed. Windows provide natural lighting. The rooms are decorated with multiple pictures of the children and their families, the children's art projects, and posters to assist the children with the learning process, such as the alphabet, shapes, colors and numbers. The children's birthdays were posted. There are areas for circle time.

The centers observed on the day of the licensing visit include library, Lego/blocks, table toys, games, puzzles, transportation, puppets, art, dramatic play, Play Doh, Ipads, writing, math, science/discovery, woodworking, sensory table and music. 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 preschool classroom uses Creative Curriculum to develop lesson plans and GOLD assessments are completed on the children. The other program rooms use the Dr. Terrie Rose PLAYbook curriculum and a variety of other resources to create lesson plans. Several rooms had binders of lesson plans. Activities are based on themes. Each teacher prepares their own lesson plans. Newsletters are prepared monthly by each room and provided to the parents. A lesson plan was available for review in each room. The program is using ProCare to complete daily sheets and to communicate with all the parents. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is used in the classrooms to redirect behaviors and meet the needs of the children. There are several visual cues in the classroom to help direct the children.

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There was a phone with emergency numbers and the center's phone number and address in each of the classrooms. Emergency fire and tornado procedures and emergency evacuation diagrams were posted by all the main program doors and outdoor exits throughout the center. A daily schedule was posted for each room.

I reviewed documentation of monthly fire and tornado drills. I reviewed documentation of monthly playground inspections. A radon test was completed in December 2024 and is good for two years. Results were within EPA guidelines. The entire building is electric so the fuel burning inspection and the carbon monoxide detector are not required. Outlets were protected. The fire marshal inspection occurred on 12/06/24.

The center participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Lunch is prepared by the Howard-Winneshiek School district during the school year. During the summer months the school provides the food items to the childcare center and the cook makes lunch. The center prepares breakfast and the morning and afternoon snack for the children. The center dishes food out on the plates for lunch and serves them to the children at the table. Family style is sometimes used for breakfast and snack for the older children. All food is served in the rooms. The kitchen area has an industrial refrigerator and freezer. Thermometers were present. There is also a refrigerator in the infant room and thermometers were present. There are two milk coolers and thermometers were present. An industrial dishwasher is used for dishes. The kitchen staff washes the dishes by hand before running the dishes through the dishwasher to sanitize them. Dishes are then allowed to air dry. Food items were stored according to NHSPS guidelines.

The center provides one brand of formula, jar food and cereal to the infants. If parents want a different brand, they provide it. Bottles are returned to the kitchen and put through the dishwasher. Food was stored according to NHSPS guidelines in the room. There is a lactation room next to the infant room for nursing mothers.

Menus are posted in the kitchen and in each of the rooms. The school provides a new lunch menu each month and the center has a six-week rotation of menus for breakfast and snacks. Allergies are confidentially posted.

The center uses bleach and water to sanitize the food tables and disinfect the diaper changing tables.

I observed and discussed diaper changing procedures with staff members. In the Little Cruisers (one-year-old) room the staff member was not going to clean and disinfect the changing table between diaper changes. I believe this is because I was making her nervous. She states she usually does do this. There was not a pattern of disregard so this will not be cited.

Each classroom has access to a bathroom in their room and there are multiple sinks in the classrooms. Handwashing and diaper changing procedures were posted in all the mandated areas.

Infants use cribs to nap. Children start transitioning to cots when they turn one-year-old.

The childcare center has two fenced in outdoor play areas. There is a large naturalistic playground. There is a hill built into this area that has two slides. There is a large sandbox, a rock path and concrete path for riding toys, a stage for the children to perform on, a music center, balance beams, sensory center and a large shade shelter. There are flower and vegetable gardens and trees provide shade. Picnic tables are available.

The second area uses Poly Extruded Matting (PEM) for fall surfacing. The PEM Playground Matting has shredded rubber contained in chambers. This area is divided into two spaces to accommodate a space for infant and toddlers. The area for the older children has climbing equipment with slides and other activities, a sandbox, a stationary bus to sit in, climbing ropes and a balance beam. There is also a grassy area for the children and a picnic table. The area for the infants and toddlers has a treehouse with a slide, pushing toys, rocking toys and a small piece of climbing equipment with slides. Shade is provided by the building, a tree and a shade structure with a tarp. There is also a large multi-purpose room available for indoor activities.

The parent information is located on a bulletin board inside the entrance. The mandatory reporter, childcare consultant and the handbook availability were posted. My contact poster was outdated. I emailed Ms. Vobr a new contact poster with my new email address. 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 twenty children files. They were in great condition.

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I reviewed six 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.

This center is well organized and because of staff longevity among the lead teachers they have great teamwork. Ms. Vobr has been with the program for several years and provides great leadership. Staff members have a terrific relationship with one another and that carries over to the care of the children. I observed staff members talk with the children about using their words to problem solve and about taking turns. They provided the children with good handwashing reminders and several of them sang with the children as they washed their hands. Rooms are decorated with several pictures of the children and art projects. Staff members provide the children with a good routine and used play to teach the children subjects like colors and numbers. Staff members offered the children choices. They were patient and nurturing with children. Staff members were on the floor with the children. They were actively engaged in play and encouraged the children to use their imaginations. They were enthusiastic and provided the children with praise. Staff members had good knowledge of the children's developmental needs and social-emotional needs. Child friendly music was playing in several rooms. I always enjoy visiting this program.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

Ms. Vobr states staff longevity has been great and she is thankful and knows she is lucky to have staff members who stay.

Ms. Vobr states her staff members are willing to complete their professional development. The center brings in a trainer from NICC so it is nice for staff members to complete their trainings together. She states the trainer is terrific.

Ms. Vobr states the center is part of the Wage Enhancement Program.

Ms. Vobr states the staff members are flexible and will help working in several rooms.

Ms. Vobr states her staff members work well together as a team.

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

Ms. Vobr has her National Administrator Credential (NAC) and she is a NAEYC member.

The program is in a secured building. The program installed cameras in each of the classrooms and in the hallways in August 2018. There are also cameras in the common areas and parking lot. The classrooms have started locking their doors.

Ms. Vobr states that both parents and staff members like the use of ProCare for communication. Staff members can send messages and pictures.

The center is an inviting atmosphere as the hallways and classrooms are decorated with the children's art work as well as pictures of the children.

Staff members participate in the WAGES and TEACH programs.

Ms. Vobr continues to be a great director. She continues to take part in committees to help all childcare centers and has stepped up to help rural childcare programs near her when they have been without directors. Her staff members trust her and she works hard to keep her staff members happy. This is reflected in their longevity with the program.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

N/A

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

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N/A

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

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

On 09/11/25 an administrative change is being made to change the capacity of the center. The program renovated the infant and three-year-old room to make them larger and they stopped using one of the preschool classrooms. The new capacity is 153 children.

Infants-immobile- 18 children
Infants-mobile- 10 children
Toddlers- 16 children
Two's- 16 children
Three's- 26 children
Four & Five's- 19 children
Preschool (Rm 72)-18 children
Multi-Purpose -School Age- 30 children
TOTAL= 153 children

Date: 09/11/2025

HHS Licensing Consultant: Becky Frost

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**.