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

Name of Center: Hand In Hand-Hiawatha **Enrollment:** 80 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 43965

Street: 103 N Center Point RD **City:** Hiawatha Iowa **Zip** 52233 **County:** Linn

Mailing Address: 103 N Center Point RD, Hiawatha, IA, 52233

Director's Name: Kathy Kolthoff **Phone Number:** 319-200-4840

On-Site Supervisor(s): Haley Becker, Cassie Himmelsbach **E-Mail:** hih@handinhandinc.com

Date(s) of Visit: 01-12-2023

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

LICENSING VISITS

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

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

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

Date Inspected: 01-11-2021

Comments :

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

Financial Type: X Profit Non-Profit NA

Accredition: Accredited NAEYC NSACA Other X NA

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

Get-Well Evening Care Special Needs

SCHEDULE: X Year-round School-Year Summer Only

HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summary Only*

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Age	Capacity
General	28	18	40	26	112
Summer					0

QRS Rating: 3

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 06-01-2022 to 06-01-2024
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Amy Lyons **Date:** 02-15-2023

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

Not applicable.

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

Hand in Hand operates multiple programs throughout the community and has been in operation for 21 years. Specifically, Hand in Hand - Hiawatha has been in operation since August, 2014. Hand in Hand - Hiawatha is a profit program which operates year-round Monday through Friday 6:30am to 6:00pm. The program serves children age infant through school-age. Hand in Hand - Hiawatha includes a statewide voluntary 4-year-old preschool program in collaboration with the Linn Mar School District. Current enrollment is 80.

Hand in Hand multi-site owner/director is Kathy Kolthoff. Ms. Kolthoff holds a degree in Early Childhood Education and Business Management. Ms. Kolthoff has achieved the National Administrators Credential (NAC) and is a member of National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Hand in Hand multi-site management personnel includes Ms. Sara Swestka who has been with Hand in Hand for over 20 years. Ms. Swestka holds her Bachelor of Art degree in Elementary Education and Early Childhood Education. Ms. Swestka has many years of experience working with children, continues to participate in much child development related training, and has achieved NAC. Hand in Hand multi-site curriculum specialist Katie Simmons has been with Hand in Hand for over 17 years, and specifically, been part of the management team since 2011. Ms. Simmons has an AA degree in early childhood education, has much experience working with children, and continues to participate in child development related training. Hand in Hand multisite school-age coordinator is Katie Little. Ms. Little has been with Hand in Hand since December, 2017. Ms. Little has a BA degree in nursing, an AA degree in marketing management, over 6 years of experience working with children, and continues to participate in much child development related training. Site specific on-site supervisors of Hand in Hand - Hiawatha are Haley Becker and Cassie Himmelsbach. Ms. Becker has a BA degree in leisure, health and human services, over 5 years experience working with children and continues to participate in much child development related training. Ms. Himmelsbach has over 8 years experience working with children and continues to participate in much child development related training.

On 1/12/2023, program space was observed.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

Hand in Hand offers a variety of early learning/childcare programming options to help meet the needs of children and families in the community.

The year 2023 marks Hand in Hand's 21st year of providing childcare and early learning services to children and their families throughout the community. Congratulations on celebrating 21 years! Specifically, Hand in Hand - Hiawatha will be in their 9th year of operation during 2023.

The mission, goal and purpose of Hand and Hand is to "...provide an engaging, nurturing, and safe environment that supports your child's foundation for learning through developmentally appropriate practices...to guide all children with experiences that will help them to grow in independence by meeting and solving problems and feeling secure with other children and adults...to provide a safe, healthy and loving environment and to meet the physical, mental, emotional, and

social needs of the children..."

Hand in Hand has the following website for families and the community to learn more about their programs: http://handinhandinc.com/.

Hand in Hand has a history of participating in quality initiatives including state and local quality initiatives. Hand in Hand - Hiawatha has achieved a 3-Star QRS.

Founding original owner Ms. Kolthoff is a local entrepreneur invested in the local and surrounding communities. Ownership and management of Hand in Hand has remained consistent. This includes owner Ms. Kolthoff, management personnel Ms. Swestka, curriculum specialist Ms. Simmons, school-age coordinator Ms. Little, and specific on-site supervisors. Management is extremely organized, and in turn, the program operates smoothly. Hand in Hand has noteworthy systems of organization in place to help ensure administrative items are completed and maintained as required. Management is knowledgeable of licensing guidelines as well as their own policies and procedures. Management has completed NAC training.

Management team continues to be mentors throughout the community as well as part of an online innovative national director social media group. Hand in Hand management team also continues to be part of a local task force known as "Building Community Childcare Solutions" which examines childcare needs and solutions. In 2021, Hand in Hand management team established an optional monthly employee wellness challenge to help focus on lowering stress and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. In 2022, Hand in Hand undertook the immense task of establishing a company-wide unique online process for staff onboarding, training, and continuous transfer of knowledge. This also lead to an updating of the company's Employee Manual and a new Lead Teacher Manual both of which have become part of the company's online staff onboarding program.

Since the last monitoring visit, Hand in Hand - Hiawatha has retained seasoned staff as well as hired some new staff. Staff throughout various classrooms reported celebrating 7 years, 4 years, 3 years, 1 year, and 3 weeks with Hand in Hand. Management continues to support employees through an accrued point system rewarding staff for their daily dedication, the ability to collaborate among all Hand in Hand sites to share materials, curriculum, joys, challenges, and ideas/planning, and staff incentives (e.g. childcare, snack cart, social media contests, wellness challenges).

Hand in Hand - Hiawatha has emergency plans, policies, and procedures in place which are annually reviewed and updated as needed. Hand in Hand sites have successfully navigated through historic local flooding (Flood of 2008), the 8/10/2020 Derecho Storm event and 2019 pandemic. In 2023, Hand in Hand began monthly employee safety plan reviews focusing on a series of topics including first-aid, housekeeping, ergonomics, proper lifting, workplace violence, and slips, trips and falls.

Hand in Hand - Hiawatha continues efforts at optimal communication between the program/staff and families. The program has an organized parent-staff/program information center, offers regular program newsletters, utilizes technological communication resources, and supports family programming activities. January 2023's posted newsletter was observed to include program reminders, what's happening in the classrooms, and suggestions for winter outdoor attire. Family programming activities include open houses, parent/program conferences, holiday parties, annual preschool graduation ceremony, off-site field experiences, muffins with mom, donuts with dad, giving back community service projects, graduate luncheon, and preschool graduation ceremony.

Hand in Hand - Hiawatha continues to partner with the building owner for maintenance. Building and grounds is maintained. Areas of the center are receiving a paint refresh this year. The kitchen is spacious, sanitary and organized. The cook has been the Hand in Hand - Hiawatha for a few years and is knowledgeable of food safety and sanitation. Classrooms continue to be arranged in a thoughtful manner with learning at the forefront. Children's accomplishments (e.g. artwork, milestone work) are displayed throughout the program space. Materials are accessible to children. Staff were observed communicating with children verbally, using picture cues, and through sign language. Curriculum is inclusive including a combination of academic based learning strategies as well as teacher inspired ideas. "A Little Spot of Emotion and Feeling" encourages children of all ages to talk about their feelings and acknowledge what their bodies look like when they have those feelings. Ms. Simmons discussed how Hand in Hand recently began piloting a "We are kind. We are workers. We are safe." throughout all classrooms to help everyone treat the classrooms in a positive way. Since the last review, Handwriting Without Tears has been individualized to support all ages and levels. Ms. Simmons talked about a goal of developing a stronger curriculum for toddlers and 2yo children. Ms. Simmons discussed the partnership with the local school district to provide statewide voluntary 4yo preschool. Ms. Simmons reported the preschool includes intense kindergarten readiness and Everyday Mathematics. Curriculum additionally incorporates conscious discipline, on-site guest speaker events, themed days, on-site space for extra enrichments (e.g. Kiddy Keys, Dance Academy) and sentimental memory book for families as each child graduates into the next classroom. Ms. Simmons talked about how Hand in Hand "...tries hard to make learning fun...if we do it in a fun way no child ever wants to leave..."

Hand in Hand - Hiawatha collaborates well with community partners including local school districts, early access persons, CCR&R, local businesses, and health professionals. Management discussed utilizing CART and AEA services when needed

in partnership with their own multi-site curriculum specialist Katie Simmons.

The infant room has a “no shoe” policy and was observed supporting safe sleep practices.

Staff engage each child in a daily health check upon arrival for early detection of apparent illness, communicable disease, or unusual condition or behavior which may adversely affect the child or the group. Staff were observed encouraging and engaging in hand washing at all levels. Staff encouraged children to "catch coughs" and "catch sneezes" in elbows. The program has policies and procedures in place for cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing. Cleaning duties were observed to be posted in various areas of the building.

On the day of the monitoring visit, staff were nurturing and attentive to the children's needs. Areas of study throughout the classrooms included snowflakes, New Year's, snow animals, ice, and winter clothes. Activities observed were many (e.g. infant cares, group circle discussions, center play experiences, large gross motor activities). Children had access to an array of materials (e.g. books, imaginative play options, sensory items, building materials, puzzles, journaling, crafts) that encouraged innovative play. Staff provided a companionable presence allowing children to have many choices in their play experiences. Routine transitions (e.g. putting on winter attire for outdoor play, clean-up activities) worked smoothly into the program's welcoming and cooperative play environment. Throughout the classrooms, staff were overheard providing children with many words of encouragement, utilizing positive redirection when needed and engaging children in much meaningful discussion. Children responded well to staff and appeared to be truly enjoying their day.

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

None noted.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

Ensure cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting spray bottles are labeled with contents and instructions of use (e.g. dilution is applicable, dwell time).

Continue to ensure each child's individual water bottle is labeled with their name.

Ensure supplies are out and ready for use in the 2yo room.

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The program's license remains in full status. Thank you for the visit.

*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.