Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: ExCel Learning Center Daycare

Provider No.: 52279

Address: 143 29th AVE SW, Cedar Rapids, IA, 52404

County: Linn

Director's Name: Darcel Pledge

On-Site Supervisor: Raily Wolfe

Phone Number: 3197746925

E-Mail: darcel@exceldaycare.com

HHS Visit Date: 09/17/2026

Licensing Period: 08/01/2025 to 08/01/2027

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 08/20/2026

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

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*
Sunday			
Monday	6:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Tuesday	6:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Wednesday	6:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Thursday	6:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Friday	6:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Saturday			

Program Population Served:

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

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Aged	Capacity
General	18	22	30	28	98
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

ExCeL Learning Center Daycare (ELCD) commenced operations on 8/23/2023. The program operates year-round M-F 6:00am-6:00pm serving children age infant through school-age. ELCS provides childcare to children age infant through school-age. Total enrolled and attending children were reported to be 45 on 9/17/2026.

Owner/director is Darcel Pledge. Ms. Pledge has a MA degree in performance technology training, MS degree in educational leadership and a BA degree in elementary education. Ms. Pledge has experience working with children and participates in professional development. On-site supervisor is Raily Wolfe. Ms. Wolfe qualifies for and was officially approved in ipower for the on-site supervisor role on 1/15/2026. Ms. Wolfe has experience working with children and participates in professional development.

On 7/21/2026 and 9/17/2026 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 an outdoor play area. There is an on-site kitchen in which all foods are prepared. Activities observed included infant cares, indoor classroom experiences and outdoor large gross motor play. During the monitoring visits, routine transitions were observed which included clean-up procedures, food service rituals, quiet rest procedures and restroom/drink breaks. On 9/17/2026, staff were observed to be in ratio and actively engaged with the children providing encouragement and positive redirection when needed. Children appeared comfortable with staff and to be enjoying the day.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

The mission of ELCD is to "...provide outstanding childcare combined with an authentic, tailored educational experience for

every student...leverage the skills and experience of our dedicated educators to cater to the unique needs of each child..." The program's goal is to "...stimulate and support the developmental growth of every child, with a particular focus on childhood literacy and social-emotional behavioral skills..."

ELCD has the following website for families and persons in the community learn more about their programs: https://exceldaycare.com/.

In 2022, ECLD participated in the Cedar Rapids Economic Alliance Race for Space competition. ELCD advanced to the semi-finals in that competition keeping founder Darcel Pledge motivated in the education field (https://www.thegazette.com/sponsored-content/new-educational-focused-daycare-excel-learning-center-daycare-launches-in-sw-cedar-rapids/). In 2023, the Cedar Rapids Gazette newspaper featured an article spotlighting ELCD as an education-focused childcare within the community. The program was also previously featured on Everyday Iowa (https://www.kcrg.com/video/2023/09/25/everyday-iowa-excel-learning/) to discuss their 2023 grand opening, fall open house and curriculum.

Owner/director Ms. Pledge is a local entrepreneur celebrating her 3rd year of business in 2026. Ms. Wolfe joined the management team in January 2026. The management team (e.g. Ms. Pledge, Ms. Wolfe) is knowledgeable of licensing guidelines as well as their own program's policies and procedures. The management team continues to develop and maintain a system of organization to help ensure administrative items are completed and maintained in a secure manner. Management discussed staffing changes that occurred summer 2026. Management acknowledged their current team of staff who are reliable, professional and enjoy working with children.

On 9/17/2026, ELCD was found to be maintaining required postings, maintaining a family-staff program information area, utilizing technological communication resources, and offering family programming activities. ELCD's unique curriculum incorporates Iowa Early Learning Standards, progress monitoring, targeted skill development, proactive intervention and development of core skills. The curriculum includes weekly teacher planning and structure learning blocks in each classroom that focus on academic, social-emotional and physical development. ELCD additionally offers a variety of program/family events (e.g. staff-family conferences, fall open house, seasonal celebrations), enrichments (e.g. water days, science experiments), and on-site guest speakers (e.g. cheer camp, gardeners, art enrichments, community helpers). Future goals continue to include outdoor playground improvements as well as participation in quality initiatives.

As of 9/17/2026, ELCD continues to have and update as needed policies and procedures that include those for safety, daily child contact, hand washing, diapering, cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting. On 9/17/2026, management and staff 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. On 9/17/2026, management and staff discussed how they have continued support from the community, their families and local businesses as to daily building and grounds conditions and repairs.

ELCD has emergency plans, policies, and procedures in place which are annually reviewed and updated as needed. The program successfully navigated through 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

109.9(1)c: All files contain documentation to indicate that ongoing staff training requirements are met, including current certifications in first aid/CPR and mandatory child abuse training.

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.

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

109.9(1)c: All files contain documentation to indicate that ongoing staff training requirements are met, including current certifications in first aid/CPR and mandatory child abuse training.

- Staff file GR reviewed (date of hire March 2025) lacked documentation of current federal record check results and staff physical on required form 470-5152.
- Staff file HS reviewed (date of hire June 2026) lacked documentation of current federal record check results.
- Staff file RW reviewed (date of hire June 2024) lacked documentation of current Iowa record check results.
- Staff file DP reviewed (date of hire October 23) lacked documentation of annual professional development hours.

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.
- Child file AB reviewed lacked documentation of current physical exam and Certificate of Immunization.
- Each infant bottle shall be labeled with child's name and date of preparation.
- One restroom located in the infant room has an exhaust-light system that is not properly functioning.
- Items stored in any child restroom shall be fully enclosed and not present a topple hazards (e.g. infant restroom TV).
- Ensure staff personal items are stored in inaccessible areas (e.g. infant room).
- Repair chipping paint (e.g. toddler room).
- One children's personal items shall be stored separately from every other child's personal items. This includes bedding that does not fit tightly to the cot (e.g. preschool room).
- Repair or replace the PreK classroom gate latch system.
- Increase outdoor loose large gross motor materials which do not require cushion surfacing (e.g. balls, balance items, romper stompers, chalk, bubbles, hula hoops, imaginative play items, water table, sand table).
- Obtain a secure outdoor shed to store loose items when not in use.
- Remedy the exposed outdoor basketball cement footing to prevent trip-fall hazards.

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

It shall be noted - on the day of the initial monitoring visit 7/21/2026, many items were noted as needing attention and corrective action. Ms. Pledge provided documentation as to how these additional items were resolved and/or were in the process of being resolved. Ms. Pledge and Ms. Wolfe acknowledged working closely with Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Ravyn Phelps and Child Care Nurse Consultant (CCNC) Angela Easley as to corrections and quality initiatives. On 9/17/2026, licensing returned to the center conducting a follow-up inspection.

On 7/21/2026 and again on 9/17/2026, on-site infant bottle preparation as well as infant bottle cleaning and sanitizing between feedings remained problematic. As a result, Ms. Pledge indicated that the center's infant bottle policies and procedures will be fully changed and implemented by 10/4/2026. Families will be required to bring in freshly prepared bottles for their infant(s) each day. After consumption, each bottle will be rinsed and then sent home for properly cleaning, sanitizing and refilling for the subsequent day. Any bottles not fed from will be sent home to be used within 24 hours of preparation. Ms. Pledge acknowledged the center will be obtaining a more spacious infant room refrigerator to be able to adequately store each infant's daily prepared bottles.

On 9/17/2026, Ms. Wolfe reported since the monitoring visit on 7/21/2026, she has been reviewing many policies and procedures with staff including staff professional development requirements (e.g. 8 annual hours required for directors and on-site supervisors, 6 annual hours required for all other staff), cleaning and maintenance checklists, what it means to provide active careful supervision, safe sleep requirements, staff hand washing policies, child hand washing policies and the need to first clean food tables prior to sanitizing and prior to any food service activities. Ms. Wolfe discussed also seeking supports from the Tanager Place Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC) program.

Licensing continues to support efforts to increase privacy and security between the outdoor play area and adjacent properties.

To help with the items noted in this report, please connect with CCR&R and apply for the "Growing Iowa" fund (https://www.iowaccrr.org/child-care-providers/iowa-child-care-funding-opportunities/) designed to support childcare in Iowa.

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A full license is issued. Thank you for the visit.

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Date: 09/25/2026

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**.