Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: UDMO Early Childhood Program-Jefferson School

Provider No.: 30281

Address: 411 E 10th St, Spencer, IA, 51301

County: Clay

Director's Name: Angie Mitchell

On-Site Supervisor: Denise Graettinger

Phone Number: 7122648855

E-Mail: jedwards@udmo.com
dhelget@udmo.com

HHS Visit Date: 09/03/2026

Licensing Period: 10/01/2025 to 10/01/2027

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 05/01/2024

Comments:

Report Visit Type:

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

License Type:

- [X] Full
- [ ] Provisional

Quality initiative:

Quality Rating: 3

- [X] Accrediation — Comments: NAEYC

Program Duration:

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

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HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*
Sunday			
Monday		7:00 AM to 5:00 PM	
Tuesday		7:00 AM to 5:00 PM	
Wednesday		7:00 AM to 5:00 PM	
Thursday		7:00 AM to 5:00 PM	
Friday		7:00 AM to 5:00 PM	
Saturday			

Program Population Served:

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

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Aged	Capacity
General			108		108
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

I conducted an unannounced visit at this Head Start program on 09/03/26. I was able to meet with Dee Graettinger, Onsite Supervisor. Dee is well-qualified for her role, with extensive education and experience in early childhood care. This site is one of several operated by UDMO and provides Early Head Start and Head Start services for children ages 2 to 4. The program is located in the former Jefferson Elementary building in Spencer and utilizes six classrooms for child programming. Hours of operation are 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., with early release on Wednesdays at noon. Early Head Start operates year-round, closing briefly in August for preparation for the upcoming school year. The center also offers morning and afternoon wrap-around care for families needing extended hours. there are 68 children enrolled at this program and 66 children present at the time of my visit.

The purpose of my visit was to complete a comprehensive evaluation of the program. This included administrative review, observation of classroom environments and daily activities, assessment of health and safety procedures, review of nutritional services, and evaluation of the outdoor play space. At the time of the visit, 58 of the program's 68 enrolled children were present.

The center uses the Creative Curriculum, which supports social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development through intentional, play-based learning. Classrooms are organized into defined learning areas—such as art, science, reading, dramatic play, and sensory exploration. Materials are rotated and arranged to promote curiosity, independence, and problem-solving. Teachers also incorporate creative elements into activities, such as adding colored stones to sensory tables to enhance engagement. Classrooms are thoughtfully arranged into play-based centers where children can explore and learn. Visual aids featuring both pictures and words are placed throughout the environment to guide children, reinforce learning concepts, and strengthen early communication skills. I observed nurturing interactions between teachers and their

students. The children's comfort and curiosity were apparent as they asked questions and shared their interests, reflecting a strong, supportive connection. I observed thorough handwashing by both students and staff, reflecting strong hygiene practices within the center.

The center has a full, on-site kitchen where meals are prepared daily. The kitchen was observed to be clean and well maintained. A posted menu lists daily nutritious meal options. All meals are served in classrooms, with lunch provided family-style to promote social interaction and self-help skills. Children brush their teeth after breakfast as part of the routine. Handwashing practices were observed to be appropriate among staff and children. Each classroom has a general first aid kit, and a nurse is on-site. Cleaning procedures appear consistent and well implemented. Fire and tornado drills are current, and the playground inspection is up to date. Radon testing is scheduled, and results will be forwarded upon completion. The boiler and fuel-burning appliance inspections were completed by the Spencer Community School annually.

The playground area is divided into two age-appropriate sections, and the fall surfacing was observed to be adequate. All equipment appeared to be in good working condition. The program has also secured grant funding to enhance the playground and purchase new equipment.

Overall, the center demonstrated a clean and well-organized environment, offering a supportive atmosphere where children can learn and thrive.

Program goals include continuing progress toward a higher IQ4K rating.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

Staff demonstrated strong transition practices, which is particularly impressive this early in the school year. Their use of predictable routines and a steady schedule support children in adjusting comfortably to changes throughout the day.

The center is currently rated at IQ4K Level 3, which highlights its ongoing efforts to provide quality programming, maintain strong teaching practices, and create an environment where children can grow and thrive.

The center uses PRIS. PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) is a framework that helps staff create a predictable, supportive environment where children understand expectations and feel encouraged to succeed. Teachers use clear, consistent routines, visual cues, and positive reinforcement to guide children's behavior. The focus is on teaching and supporting positive behaviors rather than reacting to misbehavior, helping children build confidence, self-regulation, and social skills in a nurturing way.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

109.13(5): Centers shall ensure that food preparation and storage procedures are consistent with the recommendations of the CACFPs.

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

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

Targeted Assessment: Behavior Management
I discussed with De regarding her oversight of behavior management related to helping childcare staff: 1) Understand expectations, 2) managing frustrations, 3) monitor performance.

She states the following: Staff are supported in managing frustration through clear routines, regular check-ins, and a collaborative team culture. Leadership models calm problem-solving and provides ongoing guidance to help staff feel

confident during challenging moments. Short trainings and reminders on self-regulation, stress management, and PBIS practices offer staff practical tools they can use throughout the day. Breaks and opportunities to regroup are encouraged so staff can reset when needed. Overall, the center fosters an environment where staff feel supported, valued, and equipped to maintain positive interactions with children.

A full license is recommended at this time.

At least one visit will be made to the center during the next year.

Date: 09/08/2026

HHS Licensing Consultant: Leann Steinhauer

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**.