Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: YMCA Early Learning Center - Charles E Lakin

Provider No.: 49422

Address: 235 Harmony ST, Council Bluffs, IA, 51503

County: Pottawattamie

Director's Name: Ashley Rupp

On-Site Supervisor: Jared Schmeckpeper and Angela Kramer

Phone Number: 7123226606

E-Mail: jschmeckpeper@metroymca.org akramer@metroymca.org

HHS Visit Date: 07/08/2026

Licensing Period: 12/01/2025 to 12/01/2027

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 12/22/2025

Comments:

Report Visit Type:

- [ ] PTO
- [ ] Licensing Visit
- [X] 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	6:30 AM to 6:00 PM		
Tuesday	6:30 AM to 6:00 PM		
Wednesday	6:30 AM to 6:00 PM		
Thursday	6:30 AM to 6:00 PM		
Friday	6:30 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	8	11	38	124	181
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

An unannounced licensing visit was made on 7/8/26. The YMCA Early Learning Center - Charles E. Lakin opened on 12/11/17 and runs from 6:30 AM to 6:00 PM Monday through Friday. Child care is offered to children infant age to Pre-K year-round. Ashley Ruppe is the director. Ashley is in charge of the child care center. Ashley has a bachelor's degree in education. She has been working in child care since 2018 and became the director on 1/7/25. The Schools Out Fun Club and the Summer Day Camp run from 7:00 AM to 5:30 PM. Jared Schmeckpeper is the on-site supervisor of the school age Schools Out Fun Club and Summer Day Camp. He has worked for the YMCA – Charles E. Lakin since 2021. Schools Out Fun Club is offered to school-age children on days school is not in session and the Summer Day Camp is offered to school-age children in the summer. I met with Ashley Ruppe and Jared Schmeckpeper during my licensing visit. There are 68 children enrolled in the Early Learning Center and 130 enrolled in the Summer Day Camp. Schools Out Fun Club and Summer Day Camp never run at the same time.

Observation of rooms:
Early Learning Center - There are four programming rooms including the infant room, which is split into infant 1 and infant 2, toddlers, preschool, and Pre-K. All programming rooms were in ratio. The gym and the swimming pool are also used. Parents can pay extra and sign their children up for swimming lessons. The lead teachers in the programming rooms are responsible for the lesson plans/activities and Ashley reviews them. All of the rooms had lesson plans. The center uses Creative Curriculum Gold. All of the rooms except Pre-K have weekly themes. Pre-K has units which are about three weeks. The rooms have a fun variety of age and developmentally appropriate toys and equipment that are rotated every two weeks. Toys are sanitized weekly and daily in the infant room. The center uses the Procare child care software app to communicate with the parents and for the daily sheets. The children were napping or just getting ready to nap. Staff had excellent interactions with the children. They were nurturing and attentive to the needs of the children. Bi-weekly

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newsletters are provided to parents. A librarian comes monthly to read to the children during the school year.

The Schools Out Fun Club kids were observed playing at the park, doing an art project in the community room, and doing an activity through 4-H in the kitchen room. 4-H Through Iowa State University comes twice a week. The younger kids participate with 4-H once a week and the older kids participate with 4-H once a week. The school age children use the community room, playground (which they refer to as the park), kitchen, pool observation area, gym, and pool. The gym is used for free play at the beginning and end of each day as children arrive and depart for the day. Each week has a theme with related activities on the lesson plans. This week's theme is Tinker Time and last week's theme was Wild About Nature. The school age children are split into four groups by their age. The children swim on site on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Walking field trips are taken to Bayliss Park for Omaha Street Percussion and the Squirrel Cage Jail. Guests come in and provide fun and educational programs. Some of the speakers have been 4-H, the Council Bluffs Police Department has been multiple times, and Wildlife Encounters. Navy 11 came and did some activities with the kids and were also available for questions. One guest activity was laser tag. Someone donated the laser tag equipment to use for a few days. The program also has a teaching kitchen; however, the room is used mostly for art projects. The Schools Out Fun Club sends out a daily schedule to parents. The Summer Fun Club sends out a weekly schedule to parents. The lesson plans are more structured in the summer. Jared makes the lesson plans.

Health and safety:
Both programs practice and document fire and tornado drills. Radon tests were completed in December 2023 and were in the acceptable range. Radon testing is due every five years if the results are below 4.0 pCi/L. The programs use Sani Tyze for sanitizing and disinfecting. Ashley said they learned Sani Tyze had the same chemicals for both sanitizing and disinfecting so they started using Sani Tyze for both. I asked Ashley to double check the bottle and/or website to make sure it is acceptable for disinfecting. When a child is prescribed medication, the center follows the medication management procedures. Ashley and another staff member, Angela, are medication certified and they administer medication if a child is on medication. There are other people in the building who are medication certified and available if needed. Fuel burning inspections were completed on the two boilers on 12/23/25 and 2/12/26. Sheets for the cots are sent home with kids on Fridays to be washed and then the parents return them on Mondays. The sheets were too big. The center uses crib sheets and not cot sheets. Please begin using cot sheets. The center has extra sheets if a parent forgets. Sheets from the center are washed after every use.

Playground:
The Early Learning Center has a fenced outdoor play area with a fun variety of equipment including a large climbing structure, a low tree structure with a slide, sensory table, and blue dinosaur chimes. The climbing structure is blocked off depending on the ages of the children on the playground at that time. The playground has poured in place surfacing. They also use the school age playground riding track and sometimes have snack under the pavilion. The children can use the indoor gym. They have hula hoops, balls, etc. They only use half of the gym. The school-age children have a playground, which they refer to as the park, with several pieces of equipment, basketball hoops, a large grassy area to play games, and a shade structure with tables. Monthly playground safety inspections were completed on both areas.

Transportation:
Daily transportation services aren't provided.

Nutrition:
For the Early Learning Center, breakfast, lunch, and snack are catered to the center by Black and White Catering. The center is on the federal food program. Monthly menus are posted and emailed to the parents. The center has a kitchen area for meal preparation. Children can bring their lunch in the summer.

During the summer the school age children participate in the free breakfast and lunch program at one of the local schools or they bring their lunch. Jared estimated 25-30 children walk to Hoover Elementary School for the free lunch. The rest bring their lunch and it is refrigerated. Breakfast is brought to the center and is provided by the school. The school provides breakfast and lunch during the summer from the first week in June and it ends the first week of August. Schools Out Fun Club has the children bring their own lunch. The center provides snack in the afternoon for both Schools Out Fun Club and Summer Day Camp. The center is on the federal food program.

Administrative records:
Four staff files for the Early Learning Center were reviewed. One staff member had their physical exam on the wrong form and three staff members did not have the total number of annual professional development training hours. Four staff files

for the Summer Day Camp were reviewed. Two were missing the SING background checks, one was missing the Mandatory Child Abuse Reporter training, and four were missing the required annual professional development training hours. Please complete the SING background checks immediately. Besides the required Department of Health and Human Services training, staff are required to take ongoing training through the YMCA. Ten children's files from the Early Learning Center were reviewed and two were missing the name and/or number of the dentist and one was missing the annual physical exam. Nine children's files from the Summer Fun Club were reviewed and seven listed the parents as emergency contacts and/or people authorized by the parents as to who is allowed to pick the child up from the center. There needs to be someone other than the parents listed for both of these. Two files did not have the annual statement of health. Ashley has staff meetings every four months and has weekly staff notes. Ashley and Jared talk with their staff each day.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

Ashley Ruppe became the director of the center. Ashley and Jared are positive and enthusiastic about their programs. They were very helpful during my licensing visit. Both programs look great and are a wonderful resource for the community. Staff had excellent interactions with the children. Ashley reported the center has good family involvement and even has a PTA. Ashley identified their strengths as their curriculum, they have good staff, there is a wait list, staff follow compliance and policies, and they have good relationships with the parents. Jared identified their strengths as they keep kids active, they take CCA, help families if money is an issue, and they do not kick children out unless it is a last resort.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

109.7(2): Center directors and all staff have the required contact hours of training. Four staff files for the Early Learning Center were reviewed. One staff member had their physical exam on the wrong form and three staff members did not have the total number of annual professional development training hours. Four staff files for the Summer Day Camp were reviewed. Two were missing the SING background checks, one was missing the Mandatory Child Abuse Reporter training, and four were missing the required annual professional development training hours.

109.9(2)a-c: All files contain sufficient information to allow the center to contact the parent or emergency contact at any time child is in center's care as well as who can pick up the child as authorized by the parent. Ten children's files from the Early Learning Center were reviewed and two were missing the name and/or number of the dentist and one was missing the annual physical exam. Nine children's files from the Summer Fun Club were reviewed and seven listed the parents as emergency contacts and/or people authorized by the parents as to who is allowed to pick the child up from the center. There needs to be someone other than the parents listed for both of these. Two files did not have the annual statement of health.

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

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

A full license is recommended for 12/1/25 to 12/1/27.

Targeted Assessment Behavior Management
I discussed with Ashley her oversight of behavior management related to helping childcare staff: 1. Understand expectations, 2. Managing frustrations, 3. Monitor performance. Ashley said they receive additional training through the YMCA, Ashely will step in when needed, they are able to call the parents if they struggle to control a child, and they have worked with both CCR&R and Green Hills AEA. I discussed with Jared his oversight of behavior management related to helping childcare staff: 1. Understand expectations, 2. Managing frustrations, 3. Monitor performance. Jared said he models what is expected from staff. They do not put hands on children unless that child is a threat to themselves or others. They contact parents to help calm a child if they believe it will help. They know their children. Jared uses positive reinforcement with his staff.

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Date: 07/13/2026

HHS Licensing Consultant: Tausha Bottorff

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**.