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

Name of Center: Drake University Head Start-Southridge **Enrollment:** 76 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 49507

Street: 1111 E Army Post Rd **City:** Des Moines Iowa **Zip** 50315 **County:** Polk

Mailing Address: 3800 Merle Hay Rd Suite 323 , Des Moines , IA, 50310

Director's Name: Mary Vaske **Phone Number:** 515-271-1854

On-Site Supervisor(s): Regina Nellis-Becke **E-Mail:** mary.vaske@drake.edu

Date(s) of Visit: 04-04-2025

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

LICENSING VISITS

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

Signed Application (470-0722) Received X **Yes** **No** **NA** **Date Signed:** 03-01-2024

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

Date Inspected: 10-24-2024

Comments :

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

Financial Type: Profit X Non-Profit NA

Accredition: Accredited NAEYC NSACA Other X NA

Program Serves: 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*	*Summer Only*

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Age	Capacity
General		19	105		124
Summer					0

QRS Rating: 3

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 04-01-2024 to 04-01-2026
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Melinda Larson, Child Care Licensing Consultant **Date:** 04-21-2025

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

N/A.

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

Drake University Head Start was formally known as Drake Head Start at Oak Academy. The center opened on 1/17/2018 in their new location. Mary Vaske is the Director of this program. Mary has a Masters degree in Speech-Language Pathology as well as a Bachelors degree in this same field. Mary also has a CDA in Infant/toddler. Mary had been employed with Drake Head Start for 14 years, prior to becoming the director of this Head Start. Regina Nellis-Becke is the on-site supervisor. Regina has a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education and several years experience in preschool and childcare settings. Both meet qualifications for their positions.

An unannounced visit was completed on today's date. Regina assisted with the visit. All program rooms were observed. Children were observed in their classrooms.

Room observations/activities: The center has six classrooms. There are two toddlers classrooms. These rooms operate on a year round schedule. There are four traditional classrooms for children ages three through five. These classrooms operate on a school year schedule. All classroom rooms were in ratio, offering a variety of age/developmentally appropriate play centers and toys. Interactions between staff and children were observed to be appropriate throughout the visit. This center uses Creative Curriculum Gold Staff use email and phone to communicate with parents.

Nutrition Practices: Des Moines Public School caters this center and meals/snacks are served family-style in the classrooms. Lunch served today was beef tacos with lettuce, cheese and salsa, pineapple and milk. The kitchen at the center was clean and well organized.

Health and Safety: Handwashing posters are hung by sinks. First aid kits are available in all rooms. Tornado/Fire emergency exit plans are posted in all classrooms. Radon was tested in August, 2022; all under 4.0 and testing is not due again for five years. HVAC is professionally inspected/maintained. Carbon monoxide detectors are located in each classroom.

Playground: The playground is enclosed by chain-link fencing. There are shade structures in place. Poured tile is the surfacing material. This playground is separated by ages and is maintained appropriately.

Transportation/Field Trips: The center doesn't provide transportation or take off site field trips.

Administrative Review: Mandatory postings are in place at the center's entrance and outside classroom entrances. One staff file was missing a current SING check. This was taken care of the day of the visit.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

Drake Head Start programs have a strong reputation in the community; offering quality programming for children and necessary resources for families. This center is completely renovated and in a good location for families on a bus line.

This program focuses not only on the child, but also on the whole family. The program works well with the families and provides resources and support for the family as well as setting up goals with families and getting children ready for kindergarten.

The center has a strong partnership with the school district, as well as with AEA and Early Access.

The center has a family support advocate at the site, as well as a mental health interventionist on staff.

The center partners with Drake University and master level students come to the center to complete a Behavioral Analysis and will put behavior plans in place for children who might need this.

The center has a Child Assistance Team that meets once a month.

The center has a lending library for families.

The center has a secure entrance.

The center received a five year grant for Behavior Interventionist staff, which will include two mental health consultants and support staff. This is a support for both staff and families. Weekly check-ins take place with staff to discuss how staff are doing as well as to discuss students in the classroom and any concerns. The behavioral interventionist comes into the classroom to observe and offer strategies and develop a plan. The team meets weekly to discuss the plan and any concerns. The center is also able to conduct Microsoft Teams virtual meetings which is convenient for staff. They received an additional grant to add two more staff to this partnership.

The center conducts Dental screening. The nurse conducts an eye exam for each student at the beginning of the school year.

The Health Care Institute has offered evening classes for families on health and wellness.

The center participates in IQ4K and has a three star rating.

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

109.6(6)c: Center repeats Iowa record checks at a minimum of every two years or when aware of additional child abuse or criminal history that occurs.
One staff had an overdue SING check.
This was resolved the day of the visit.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

The center has a full license.

*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.