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

Name of Center: American Home Finding Child Care Center **Enrollment:** 17 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 24726

Street: 126 N Jefferson **City:** Ottumwa Iowa **Zip** 52501 **County:** Wapello

Mailing Address: PO Box 656, Ottumwa, IA, 52501

Director's Name: Meliza Cloke **Phone Number:** 641-684-8672

On-Site Supervisor(s): Nanette Smith **E-Mail:** mcloke@ahfa.org

Date(s) of Visit: 05-27-2025

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:** 04-10-2023

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

Date Inspected: 08-12-2024

Comments : completed by Ottumwa Fire Department David Cronin, due annually

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

Financial Type: Profit X Non-Profit NA

Accredition: Accredited NAEYC NSACA X Other NA

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

Get-Well Evening Care Special Needs

SCHEDULE: Year-round X School-Year Summer Only

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

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Age	Capacity
General	13	13			26
Summer					0

QRS Rating: N/A

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 06-01-2024 to 06-01-2026
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Jill Seibert **Date:** 07-31-2025

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

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

American Home Finding Child Care Center is located in two renovated classrooms on the basement level of the Lutheran Church. The center is owned and operated by American Home Finding Association, a local non profit private social service agency. The Center primarily serves children of students attending Ottumwa High School but is open to the children of school staff also. Meliza Cloke began as the Center Director in August 2015. She meets qualifications to be a Director, has a BA in Human Services and previously worked at a local Emergency Shelter for three years and was the overnight supervisor the last six months. She is typically present on site between 7:45-4:15 p.m. The center relocated last last year. It was formerly in the Ottumwa High School.

Nannette Smith has been employed at the center since September of 2006 and served as Co-Director from August of 2007-2015.

Other part time employees: Julie Park has worked part time at the center since November 2012. She has an AA degree in general sciences, and 10+ hours college credits in the field of early childhood development. She has several years of experience as well as 100s of professional development hours. Julie Park also serves as OSS. Madison Cloke was hired April 2022. The center has one extra staff on duty throughout the day.

The Center cares for newborn to preschool age children, giving priority placement to student parents. Child Care staff engage with student parents on many levels to help them stay in school and gain valuable parenting skills. AHFCCC follows the Ottumwa School District schedule and is closed on all Holiday/Breaks when school is not in session, in addition to the summer months and school cancellations/early dismissals.

The program consists of an infant area and a toddler/preschool age area located in two different rooms. The areas in the room for toddlers and preschool age are separated by a child sized restrooms. Both spaces are open and contain age appropriate furniture and play equipment/cribs.

On 5/27/25 I made an unannounced off year visit to American Home Finding Child Care Center and met with director, on site supervisor and other staff members. All program areas were observed. The visit consisted of classroom and building area review and observations of activities, ratios, nutritional practices, health and safety practices, playground observation, field trip and transportation practices, and administrative review.

Center Nutrition Practices Observed:

Meals are served family style in the classrooms. The kitchen contains newer equipment, sufficient storage for center food, and sufficient dish washing capacity to accommodate a center of this size. However, the center kitchen is upstairs. Posted menus indicate minimum nutritional requirements are not always being met. The school district provides food for the program, but some of the foods served to not meet CACFP guidelines. The program must follow CACFP guidelines. No food was stored on the floor and any open food items were in sealed bags or containers. No expired food items were observed. The center may access IDPH CCNC at anytime they have food or nutrition questions or a child has special

dietary needs. The Consultant is located in their home office in Ottumwa (AHFA).

Center Health and Safety:

The center administers prescription and non-prescription medication in accordance with licensing regulations, physician directions, and parental consent. Medication is properly stored and documentation present. We discussed children with allergies or any special health care needs. Any medication is stored out of the reach of children.

We reviewed compliance with regulations regarding staff and child hand washing, storage and maintenance of a first aid kit, emergency plans and drills for fire and tornado, environmental testing and the maintenance of any necessary detection equipment, and general regulations regarding safety and sanitation policies and procedures.

Carbon monoxide detectors are present. The church has gas furnaces so the Director will ask the church for updated inspections. Annual fuel burning inspections are required. Radon testing has not yet been conducted The testing should indicate pCi/L levels under 4. Updated testing is due every 5 years. Testing should be conducted in winter months when the ground is frozen. The program rooms have had updated construction after 1971 and do not contain lead based paint.

The center is secured by a locked door. Parents or visitors must ring a door bell and be buzzed in.

Center Playground:

The center has a fenced cement and surfaced outdoor play area immediately beside the center. The areas are fenced and divided so that children can be separated by age. The Child Care Weather Watch should be utilized to assess whether outdoor play is appropriate due to questionable weather conditions. At times a larger room is utilized for gross motor play. We inspected the area the date of the visit. In both areas each child has a minimum of 75 square feet each for gross motor activities.

Center Transportation Arrangements/Field Trips:

The center does not provide transportation. Groups may take walks around campus which is not considered a field trip. The Director may consider the possibility of providing transportation in the future and the requirements of such.

Center Administrative Records:

Child misbehavior is addressed by redirection, positive reinforcement of appropriate behavior. The program utilized PBIS. The center is in compliance with regulations regarding required notices and postings including Mandatory Reporter information, the Center License, HHS Licensing Consultant contact information, and No Smoking signage. Required written policies are provided to parents in the form of a parent handbook.

Staff and child records were examined during this inspection. Staff and child records are mostly complete and well organized.

Staff Files: Staff have updated professional development training due annually. They posses current CPR/1st Aid training due every two years as well as Mandatory Reporter training, SING checks, and Fingerprint results. Each staff have updated physicals, due every three years.

Child Files: Updated physicals are due annually as are updated immunization records, emergency contacts, field trip authorizations, dental and medical contact information and pick up authorizations.

The Director has historically worked with IDPH Child Care Nurse Consultant Jamie Crouse annually on child record reviews.

Center curriculum is utilized daily. Lesson Plan assistance is available through CCR&R. The center follows schedules and routines are implemented.

The center Director updated the Emergency Preparedness Plan and all staff have been trained on the plan. They have signed and dated acknowledgement of such.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

Several staff are long term employees.

The Director frequently accesses assistance from providers when necessary.

PBIS Coach Joan Garrett visits the center once every 2 months to provide consultation.

Employees are entered in IPOWER which is best practice.

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

No licensing area was found to be in a pattern of disregard the date of the visit.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

Many positive changes have been made in the center since Ms. Cloke has taken on Director responsibilities. The Director should meet with IDPH CCNC Jamie Crouse and CCR&R Child Care Consultant Karen Lauer for licensing issues and best practice suggestions.

Based upon this review, it is recommended that this center remain in Full licensing status. It is important to note, all HHS licensing standards and procedures must be maintained during the renewal period.

I referred Director Cloke to CCR&R in 2015 and she does access consultation services. They are available for consultation at anytime as are IDPH Child Care Nurse Consultants. HHS encourages you to contact Child Care Resource and Referral Consultant Karen Lauer. Consultant Lauer contacted the Director prior to the relocation and making a visit in 2024. In the past year including IQ4K, training and consultation on the EPP. She also toured the building prior to moving. They offer centers assistance with meeting the DHS regulations, QRS, infant/toddler concerns, room arrangement and environment, developmental concerns, Best Practice information, CDA assistance, or any questions or concerns you may have.

HHS encourages you to contact your local nurse consultant. Iowa Department of Public Health Child Care Nurse Consultant Jamie Crouse (American Home Finding Association-Ottumwa) works with child care and early education businesses. Businesses may call or send questions to a child care nurse consultant about health and safety policies, health programs, health of personnel, and specific child health or safety issues. The program has a new CCNC, Mary Mikulecky.

The center accesses PBIS Coach Joan Garrett who conducts training/ presentations and PBIS coaching and consultation. This is best practice and duly noted.

*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.