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: Cassie Wertz

On-Site Supervisor: Joyce Clements, Jared Schmeckpeper

Phone Number: 7123226606

E-Mail: cwertz@metroymca.org jclements@metroymca.org

HHS Visit Date: 12/05/2025

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

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 09/13/2021

Comments: Fire inspections are due every three years. Please get me a copy of your most recent fire inspection.

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

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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

Unannounced licensing visits were made on 12/5/25 and 12/22/25. I visited the Early Learning Center on 12/5/25 and the Schools Out Fun Club on 12/22/25. The YMCA Early Learning Center - Charles E. Lakin opened on 12/11/17 and runs from 6:30 AM to 6:00 PM. The Schools Out Fun Club and the Summer Day Camp run from 7:00 AM to 5:30 PM. Ashley Ruppe is the director. Cassie Wertz and Jared Schmeckpeper are the on-site supervisors. Ashley is in charge of the child care center. Ashley has a bachelor's degree in education. She has been working in child care for five years and became the director on 1/7/25. 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 for seven years. Child care is offered to children infant age to preschool year-round. 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, Jared Schmeckpeper, and Amanda Sindelar during my licensing visits. There are 153 children enrolled. Sixty-three are enrolled in the Early Learning Center, 80 are enrolled in the Summer Day Camp, and 10 are enrolled in the Schools Out Fun Club. 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. 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, but they did not meet all the necessary objectives. 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 frequently. Toys are sanitized weekly and more often in the infant room. I informed them infant toys are to be sanitized daily. The center uses the Procare child care software app to communicate with the parents and for the daily sheets. The children were having fun playing. Staff had excellent interactions with the children. They were nurturing and attentive to the needs of the children. Weekly newsletters are provided to parents. A librarian comes monthly to read to the children.

The Schools Out Fun Club kids were observed swimming when I initially arrived on 12/22/25 and then in the game room after swimming. The school age children use the community room, game room, playground (which they refer to as the park), gym, and pool. There were nine children present on the day I was present. The summer program has an average of 80 children a week. Each week has a theme with related activities on the lesson plans. The school age children are split into four groups by their age. The children swim on site on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. A variety of walking field trips are taken i.e. library, park, Hoover Elementary, etc. Guests come in and provide fun and educational programs. 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 June/July 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 Quat 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. A fuel burning inspection was completed on 12/19/24. In the toddler room, there is one sink that has been used for handwashing and drinking/doing dishes. The is a health and safety hazard as cross contamination can occur. Ashley talked with staff and they will use it as a handwashing sink. The children all have water bottles and there is a fountain to fill up water bottles outside of the rooms. Sheets for the cots are sent home with kids on Fridays to be washed and then the parents return them on Mondays. 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 padded 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 and lunch are catered to the center by Mid-Day Meals. The daily snack is provided by the center. 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. During the summer the school age children participate in the free breakfast and lunch program at one of the local schools. Breakfast is brought to the center. The children walk to the local school for lunch and the center provides the daily snack. The school provides breakfast and lunch during the summer from the first week in June and it ends the first week of August. The Schools Out Fun Club has the children bring their own lunch. The center provides snack in the afternoon.

Administrative records:
Seven staff files were read and were in good order. One staff member from the Summer Fun Club was missing the national background check. Besides the required Department of Health and Human Services training, staff are required to take ongoing training through the YMCA. Staff did not have the required six hours of personal development training. Nine children’s files from the Early Learning Center were reviewed and two were missing their annual physical. Two children’s files from the Summer of Fun Club were reviewed and both were missing 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. Some goals the center has are to grow the program, build team morale, and find a licensed Pre-K teacher.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

109.6(4)d: Seven staff files were reviewed. One staff member from the Summer Fun Club was missing the national background check.

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109.7(2): Seven staff files were reviewed. Only one had the mandatory six hours of annual personal development.

109.9(2)i: Eleven children's files were reviewed from the Early Learning Center and the Schools Out Fun Club. Several were missing either their annual physical for children not yet in kindergarten or the school age children were missing their annual statement of health completed by the parents.

109.10(3): In the toddler room, staff were using the single sink for both dishes and handwashing. This risks cross-contamination.

109.12(1)a: The Early Learning Center had lesson plans, but they were not complete and did not meet HHS guidelines.

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.

I made a referral to the Child Care Resource and Referral to assist Ashley with lesson planning.

Your fire inspection was due by 9/13/24. They are due every three years. This has been brought to staff's attention. I spoke with the Council Bluffs Fire Department so a new inspection should be done by the end of the year. Please get me a copy upon completion.

Date: 12/23/2025

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**.