Iowa Department of Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER COMPLAINT

Name of Center: A Step Above Child Care and Learning Center, LLC **Enrollment:** 36 **License ID:** 50771

Street: 2882 Palo Marsh Rd Suite A **City:** Palo **IA** **Zip Code:** 52324 **County:** Linn

Mailing Address: 2882 Palo Marsh RD Suite A

Mailing City: Palo **IA** **Zip Code:** 52324

Director's Name: Michelle McKinstry **Center Phone Number:** 319-851-2671

On-Site Supervisors: Tiffany Morris **E-Mail Address:** mgreenwalker01@gmail.com

Date of Complaint: 05-22-2025 **Date of Visit:** 05-29-2025

[ ] Scheduled **[X]** Unannounced **[ ]** NA

[X] Non-Compliance with Regulations Found **[ ]** Compliance with Regulations Found

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE

[X] NO CHANGES to licensing status recommended

[ ] PROVISIONAL license from **to**

[ ] SUSPENSION of License

[ ] REVOCATION of License

Complaint Details:

Did this complaint result in a serious injury? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Did this complaint result in a death to a child? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Summary of Complaint:

On 5/22/2025, a complainant reported from 7-8:00am the infant room is never in ratio. The complainant reported on 5/19/2025, a school-age room staff was running to the infant room when parents arrived so that no one would see the program was out of ratio. The complainant reported on 5/20/2025 from 7-10:00am, there was 1 staff with 7 infants. The complainant reported on 5/21/2025, there was again 1 staff with 7 infants. The complainant reported on 5/20/2025, a staff was diagnosed with pink eye and tried to find another staff to take her shift on 5/21/2025. The complainant reported the staff with pink eye was told they could not have the day off because "everyone works with pink eye". The complainant reported infant bottles are not labeled and infants' hands are not washed after diaper changes. The complainant reported none of the employees are properly trained. The complainant also indicated 2yo room staff "Livvy" is involved in a situation and should not be working in the childcare.

Licensing Rules Relevant to the Complaint:

109.4(3)a Postings are required for:The certificate of license.Notice of exposure to communicable disease.Notice of decision to deny, suspend, or revoke center license or reduce to provisional status.All postings shall be conspicuously placed at main entrance of center.

109.7(2) Center directors and all staff have the required contact hours of training.

109.8(2) Ratio maintained in center as required by age.

109.11(3)a Center shall ensure that: Facility and premises are sanitary, safe, and hazard free. Adequate indoor and outdoor space is provided. The outdoor area shall include safe play equipment and area of shade. Sufficient space provided for dining. Sufficient lighting shall be provided. Sufficient ventilation. Sufficient heating. sufficient cooling. Sufficient bathroom and diapering facilities. Equipment, including kitchen appliances, are maintained so as not to result in burns, shock, or injury to children. Sanitation and safety procedures for the center are developed and implemented to reduce risk or injury or harm to children and reduce transmission of disease.

Inspection Findings:

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On 5/29/2025, licensing conducted a visit to A Step Above Child Care Center. The findings below are based upon a review of the complaint, a face-to-face interview with combined owner-director Michelle McKinstry, a face-to-face interview with on-site supervisor Tiffany Morris, face-to-face interviews with various staff throughout the center, observations while on-site and a review of administrative items.

109.8(2) Ratio maintained in center as required by age. RULE VIOLATED. COMPLAINT VALID.
- On 5/29/2025, licensing perused all child areas. For a period of time, the infant room had 13 infants with only 3 staff while the school-age room had a total of 22 children of combined ages infant through school-age with only 2 staff. Licensing observed the school-age room to also be operating in a chaotic manner with at least 3 children running around with food in their hands (e.g. Cheetos, waffles) playing and eating rather than sitting at clean tables with clean hands.
- It shall be noted by the time licensing left the childcare on 5/29/2025, all child areas were within ratio. RESOLVED.
- Licensing, management and staff reviewed ratio rules. Management and staff agreed to stop accepting more children into the program than there are staff to accommodate at any given time.
- On 6/10/2025, Ms. McKinstry reported ratio requirements have been posted in all classrooms. Ms. McKinstry indicated she had extensive discussions with all employees on the need to maintain ratio. Ms. McKinstry reported being present more at drop-off time to help everyone understand ratio. Ms. McKinstry also reported implementing a new rule that all children are dropped off in their assigned classrooms and that each staff is to be in the room they are scheduled to work. RESOLVED.

109.7(2) Center directors and all staff have the required contact hours of training. RULE VIOLATED. COMPLAINT VALID.
- Staff file reviewed (SP hired May 2024) lacked documentation of current UP, MCART, Essentials and annual professional development hours. This staff also lacked documentation of current federal record check results. IN PROCESS OF BEING FULLY REMEDIED.
- Staff file reviewed (OR also known as "Livvy" hired April 2025) lacked documentation of physical exam. It shall be noted as of 5/29/2025, this staff is no longer employed at the center. RESOLVED.

109.4(3)a Postings are required for: Notice of exposure to communicable disease. RULE VIOLATED. COMPLAINT VALID.
- Information gathered indicated recent conjunctivitis was present and there was an absence of on-site posting for the communicable disease. Licensing and Ms. McKinstry reviewed how current postings for communicable disease can be found online in the Iowa (IDHHS) EPI Manual (https://hhs.iowa.gov/center-acute-disease-epidemiology/epi-manual). Licensing and Ms. McKinstry discussed how according to the EPI manual, persons do not need to be excluded for conjunctivitis "...unless they are directed to do so by a physician or public health professional, or if they have a fever or additional symptoms indicating a more serious infectious illness..."
- Licensing and Ms. McKinstry discussed how exclusion guidance found in the EPI guidance, applies to all persons whether child or adult. Also discussed was that if a staff has a communicable disease and needs to be excluded without availability of a substitute staff, policies need to be implemented to ensure ratio is met including possibly closing the entire classroom or asking parents to voluntarily not send their children until that staff is well again. REMEDIED.

109.11(3)a Center shall ensure that: Facility and premises are sanitary, safe, and hazard free. RULE VIOLATED. COMPLAINT VALID.
- Licensing, management and staff throughout the center reviewed policies and procedures for hand washing, diapering and labeling children's personal items including bottles.
- On 5/29/2025, licensing observed the center did not have properly made and labeled cleaner, sanitizer and disinfectant in all required areas (e.g. sanitizer for food surfaces, disinfectant for diapering areas). All cleaner, sanitizer and spray bottles shall be labeled with contents (e.g. name of product), dilution if applicable, and instructions of use (including dwell time).
- On 6/23/2025, Ms. McKinstry reported while researching products the center will be using a bleach water solution prepared fresh each day by on-site supervisor Ms. Morris. IN PROCESS OF BEING FULLY REMEDIED.

Special Notes and Action Required:

It is beneficial to note, Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) and the nurse consultant are excellent resources to access training opportunities and support in the area.

Based upon the above, no response to this report is requested.

*Note: If you are the Child Care Center Director and you feel something is unclear or unjustly cited, please contact your DHHS Licensing Consultant to discuss the issue. The childcare 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 DHHS Licensing Consultant to inquire.

Consultant's Signature:

Amy Lyons

Date:

06-25-2025