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

Name of Center: Elma Early Childhood Center **Enrollment:** 42 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 19089

Street: 319 Oak ST **City:** Elma Iowa **Zip** 50628 **County:** Howard

Mailing Address: PO Box 63, Elma, IA, 50628

Director's Name: Samantha Burke **Phone Number:** 641-393-2028

On-Site Supervisor(s): Christine Scott **E-Mail:** elmaearlychildhood@gmail.com

Date(s) of Visit: 07-11-2025

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

LICENSING VISITS

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

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

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

Date Inspected: 07-24-2023

Comments : The new infant room was inspected on 08/30/23

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 Other X NA

Program Serves: X Infants (0-23 mo.) X 2 Years X Preschool-Age X 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	17	10	15	19	61
Summer					0

QRS Rating: N/A

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 09-01-2024 to 09-01-2026
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Becky Frost **Date:** 08-07-2025

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

N/A

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

On 07/11/25 I made an unannounced off year licensing visit to Elma Early Childhood Center. I met with Christine Scott, the on-site supervisor/assistant director. Ms. Scott has been with the center since April 2024. I also briefly met with Samantha Burke, the interim director. She is a preschool teacher at Riceville School and has a BS in elementary education. She has several years of experience as a teacher and in childcare. The center employs thirteen employees.

The Elma Early Childhood Center opened on 06/05/08 and began operation at its current location on 08/19/08. The program operates year-round Monday through Friday 5:00 am until 6:00 pm. It serves infants through school-age children. They also have a summer only program and allow drop-ins when staff ratios allow. The three-year-old preschool class will be on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8:30-11:00 am. Ms. Scott will be the preschool teacher. There are currently 42 children enrolled.

The program operates out of three rooms. An infant room (birth until they turn two) a larger room is used for children who are two years old and older and there is a three-year-old preschool room that will be used during the school year. You must request an Exception to Policy through Des Moines to allow for two and three-year-old children to be cared for in the same room as children four and older. The preschool room is occasionally used by the school-age children during the summer.

An inspection of each room was completed. Windows provide natural lighting for the room for the infant room and the room for the older children, but artificial lighting is used in the three-year-old preschool room. The room for the older children is decorated with the children's art projects and their birthdays. The preschool room is decorated with posters to assist the children with the learning process, such as the alphabet, colors and numbers.

The centers observed on the day of the licensing visit include library, Lego/blocks, table toys, games, puzzles, transportation, art, dramatic play, listening, science, sensory table and music. Centers were arranged in a manner that allowed easy movement between activities, but it also allowed for clear supervision by staff members. Materials were in good condition. The materials are located at child level, so they are easily accessible to the children.

Cribs are used in the infant room and cots are used to nap for the older children.

The Creative Curriculum and a variety of other resources are used to create lesson plans. Activities are planned around weekly themes. A lesson plan was available for review in the large room and infant room. Ms. Scott is preparing the lesson plans for the rooms at this time. Preschool had not started yet during my visit.

There was a phone with emergency numbers and the center's address and phone number in between the preschool room and the room for the older children and in the infant room. Emergency fire and tornado procedures and evacuation diagrams were posted by all the main program doors and outdoor exits in the center. A daily schedule was posted in each room.

The program participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The center provides the children with

breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack. Lunch is prepared by Riceville Community School. Someone picks up the lunch from the school once each week and is kept in the kitchen. Some items are fresh and other items are frozen. The school provides a lunch menu. Parents do pay a fee for lunch. The staff members prepare the plates for the children. Breakfast and snacks are prepared by the center staff members. Menus are prepared by Ms. Burke and they were available for review. She makes a new menu each month. Children eat in the classrooms. Dishes are washed in each room using the three-step method.

Parents provide formula, baby food and cereal for their children. Bottles are washed in the infant room using the three-step method.

While I was in the infant room, I observed a child using a pacifier that has a stuffed animal attached. These are not allowed in childcare.

There is a kitchenette in the room for the older children. Food items were stored according to the NHSPS guidelines. There is a refrigerator in each of the rooms and thermometers were present.

The center uses the Community Centers kitchen. The kitchen has one refrigerator and thermometers were present. Sue Miller is the "lunch duty" staff member. She works 9:00-11:30 am each day. Ms. Miller prepares lunch and snacks. The childcare opener prepares breakfast.

The center uses bleach and water to sanitize the food tables and disinfect the changing tables. I discussed diaper changes with the infant room staff member and proper procedures are followed.

The center has two bathrooms in the larger room with one toilet in each room and a sink outside of the bathrooms. There is a changing table in one of the bathrooms. Handwashing procedures were posted near the sink. Diaper changing procedures were posted. There is a bathroom in the infant room with a toilet and sink and procedures were posted. There is a handwashing sink and food prep sink inside the infant room. Handwashing procedures were posted. There is a diaper changing table in the infant room and procedures were posted. There are two sinks inside the preschool room and procedures were posted. There are additional bathrooms in the community center if necessary.

I reviewed documentation of monthly fire and tornado drills. I reviewed documentation of monthly playground inspections. The center uses two city park playground areas that are bordering the center. The areas are inspected before use.

The radon test was completed in December 2023 and is good for five years. Results were within EPA guidelines. The annual fuel burning inspection was completed and no concerns were noted. A carbon monoxide detector was on site and is on the ledge between the preschool room and the room for the older children. Outlets were protected. The fire marshal inspection for the new infant room occurred on 07/24/23 with compliance on 08/30/23.

The program is using ProCare for their daily sheets and to communicate with all parents.

The parent information is located on a bulletin board inside the front entrance of the center. The childcare consultant and the handbook availability were posted. The license was conspicuously hung. A no-smoking sign was posted at the entrance. You must post a mandatory reporter poster.

The center has a fenced in playground that they are still working on. The area has a dirt hill that has two slides built into it. There is a stationary fire truck for the children to climb on. There is a caterpillar tunnel on the grass. If the children climb on top of the caterpillar tunnel it will require fall surfacing. There is a second tunnel. The area has a basketball hoop, a log cabin playhouse and sensory table. The center is going to add a sandbox. There is a concrete path. There is a tree for shade, but the center is also adding a canopy. There is a street sign inside of the playground. I recommend moving this outside of the playground. I would recommend asking Heidi Walker, the childcare nurse consultant, to come help arrange the playground and make suggestions.

Ms. Scott and I also visited both city parks. The city park east of the center has a basketball court. There are three areas with climbing equipment and swings. This area needs fall surfacing terribly. It has minimal woodchips. This area should not be used until adequate woodchips are added.

The city park south of the center has woodchips and pea gravel for fall surfacing. There are several pieces of climbing equipment. There are a few areas where woodchips need to be added before the play equipment, such as the swings, the snail climbing apparatus and the teeter totter should be used.

Staff members moved around the rooms to interact with the children and provide adequate supervision. Child friendly music was playing in the rooms. I observed staff members to be nurturing. They were patient and used positive redirection when necessary. Staff members offered the children choices and were flexible with their schedule to meet the needs of the children. Staff members used play to talk with the children about colors and counting. Staff members had good

handwashing reminders. They provided the children with praise and sat on the floor with the children to introduce them to activities. The children appeared to enjoy their time at the center.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

Ms. Scott states they have good staff longevity. She states the staff members have good unity and their communication has improved.

Ms. Scott states the center uses the ProCare app to communicate with parents and complete daily sheets on infants.

Ms. Scott states the board has divided up the administrative duties among various people on the board to help her with administrative tasks.

The center is a bus stop for the school-age children to Riceville School and Howard-Winn School.

This center has had problems finding and keeping directors. The board has always done a terrific job of stepping up to take on administrative tasks to keep the center running.

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

109.4(2): 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.Mandatory reporting requirements.Notice of availability of the handbook.Name and contact information of the HHS licensing consultant.Program activities and menus.All postings shall be conspicuously placed at the main entrance of the center.
Post a mandatory reporter poster on your parent board.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

A full license is issued for the remainder of the licensing period. All DHS licensing standards and procedures must be maintained during the renewal period.

*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.