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

Name of Center: Kids Spot Daycare **Enrollment:** 72 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 16081

Street: 114 N Michigan ST **City:** Lake City Iowa **Zip** 51449 **County:** Calhoun

Mailing Address: 114 N Michigan ST, Lake City, IA, 51449

Director's Name: Allison Mernka, Rebecca Smith **Phone Number:** 712-464-3053

On-Site Supervisor(s): **E-Mail:** kidsspot@wccta.net

Date(s) of Visit: 07-02-2025

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: 09-27-2023

Comments :

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	21	14	23	14	72
Summer					0

QRS Rating: 3

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 08-01-2024 to 08-01-2026
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Raymond Salsbury **Date:** 07-12-2025

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

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

An unannounced annual visit was made to the Kids Spot Daycare on 07-02-25 where I met with the co-director, Rebecca Smith. Allison Mernka took over as a co-director of this program in late 2020, and was joined by Rebecca Smith who became a co-director in early 2023. Both are well qualified for the position based on their experience and on-going training. This center is located in an old medical office in Lake City that had a major renovation completed in 2023. The center is operated as a non-profit program overseen by a board of directors. The center provides daycare to infants through school age children. There are 72 children enrolled in the program served by 20 teachers. All aspects of the program subject to Licensing Standards were reviewed during the visit.

The general layout and design of the building and classrooms remains the same as from prior visits. The rooms are based on age groups with infants separated into two rooms with one for younger infants under 12 months of age, and one for infants 12-24 months of age. The 2 and 3 year old children make use of larger open central room spaces. The preschool, and school age children make use of the classrooms that were added as part of the expansion in 2023. Windows along the exterior walls provide natural light, a view of the outdoors, and ventilation for all classrooms. The center does have a lower level which had been used for programming in the past but which is now used for storage and emergency storm shelter. Secondary exits providing direct access to the outdoors was added to all classrooms and all exits were clear of obstruction and opened easily and freely. Restrooms are directly available from all classroom spaces with the exception of the school age room which makes use of restrooms off the main entry corridor. All classrooms were observed to be clean with only minor maintenance issues such as damaged paint and drywall which did not rise to the level of being a safety concern. Each room makes use of furniture and play structures to define activity centers which are arranged so as not to create any blind areas.

Classroom arrangements and programming also generally remain the same as observed in prior visits. The available activity centers increase in both options and complexity in classrooms as age groups progress. Activity centers were well supplied with toys and materials that were in good repair and generally appropriate to the ages of the children present but some toys in the infant rooms had parts that would be considered choking hazards. It was reviewed that items and toys with parts that could easily break off which would be less than 1 1/4 inches diameter and 2 1/4 inches length would be choking hazards and need to be removed from classrooms serving children under 3 years of age, and kept in storage where they can be brought out for supervised play for children 3 years of age. A copy of the daily schedule and planned curriculum was posted for each room and good interactions were observed with staff in all classrooms implementing the planned curriculum. This included teachers moving children through activities such as self-directed center play, teacher lead small group activities such as dong craft projects, and teacher lead large group activities such as reading stories or engaging the children in an instructional video activity. Good behavior management techniques were observed with staff using routines, reminders, positive recognition, and redirection to promote positive behavior and interactions. The school age classroom also uses a positive behavior recognition rewards system of "Behavior Bills" where children can earn "money"' to purchase specific privileges or prizes. Ratio was maintained in each classroom as required by age.

Good health and safety practices were observed throughout the center. During the visit I was able to observe a diaper change and staff follow the posted procedures. Good cleaning practices were observed during the visit with the staff

disinfecting and sanitizing surfaces as appropriate, and waiting for children to be out of the area before using chemical cleaners. Medications, chemical cleaners, and employee personal items were stored in areas where they were not accessible to the children. During the visit staff were applying sunscreen to younger children before going outside to play and the staff did wear gloves which were changed between application for each child. Emergency response plans were present in classrooms for children with identified allergies and health concerns. First aid kits are maintained in the classrooms and center office and taken as a whole contain materials necessary to address most common first aid needs. Safe sleep was followed for children under 1 year of age. One issue that was observed was with regard to supervision of the school age children. As noted the children make use of restroom spaces located outside the room off the main entry corridor. During the visit children were sent to the restrooms on their own to change into swimsuits for a planned off site activity of going to the public pool. While the children are of an age that they would not require assistance to change staff still need to escort the children or position in a manner that allows them to maintain direct line of sight and sound of the children at all times to reduce the risk of children using the opportunity to elope from the center.

Meals are prepared on site in a small kitchen area. Good food storage and handling practices were observed in the kitchen during the time of my visit. All food items were stored in air tight sealable food grade containers after having been opened, and were labeled. The center does need to monitor pantry storage on the lower level as there was evidence of rodent dropping in the pantry area and on the shelving units. There was no indication of damage to any of the stored food packages, and it was confirmed that the center does have a pest management service. It is noted however that this issue was cited in the prior licensing visit as well indicating that is an on-going concern that will need to be monitored. It may require the center to engage in a more thorough deep cleaning of moving appliances and shelving units to ensure that any spilled food items that could be serving as an attractant are removed. A menu is posted and identifies a good variety of nutritionally appropriate meals. Meals and snacks are served in the classrooms. I was able to observe lunch service and the staff did wear food service gloves, used measured scoops, and modified food for bite size for younger children. Staff did not eat with the children but did provide supervision at the tables.

The center playground has a large commercial climbing structure with a variety of elements. A disc climbing element did have a retaining bolt that was loose and allowed the bolt to be turned by hand. The staff that were present were informed that climbing element needed to be cordoned off from use until such time that the bolt could be tightened. A unitary pour in place foam rubber product is used for fall surfacing and does cover the full of the playground. The playground is fully enclosed by chain link fencing which was in good repair. In addition to the climbing structures there was a variety of toys including balls, push toys, riding toys, etc. which were observed to be in good repair. Awning shade structures have been installed to provide shade.

In reviewing administrative records all required postings for no smoking, consultant contact, mandatory abuse reporting, and the center license were hung in an area that was readily accessible to all parents and visitors. Emergency evacuation postings with both diagram and written instructions for fire and tornado were posted by all exits from all programming spaces. The center is using the Playground data management and communication program for record maintenance. This program does allow the center to run reports and track information that is missing or expired. A random sample of files were selected for review and compared to the the entered data which was accurate and showed that information was current for all but 2 children that needed an updated physical. In reviewing staff files the self-audit completed by the center was again found to be accurate. The self-audit did however identify a renewal period for Iowa SING background checks as being needed every 3 years which is inaccurate resulting in 9 records being expired. It was reviewed with Rebecca that the renewal period is every 2 years and those records that were expired needed to be renewed immediately. Inspection logs and certificates were available and current for all required elements. The testing results for Radon were dated 06-09-25 and showed a level of 5.1 (+/-1.2) pCi/L. The center does not have a mitigation system and Rebecca stated that the center would be conducting a more accurate long term exposure test to determine average on-going levels.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

The center is participating in the IQ4K program which seeks to implement best practice recommendations and is currently rated as a level 3 program on 5 level scale. Rebecca stated that the program is working improve the rating to a Level 4 for the upcoming year.

Rebecca did identify that the center also has very stable staffing with many of the staff having been with the center for several years. This has helped to maintain a continuity of programming with implementation of curriculum. It has also allowed for the staff to develop strong relationships with the children and their families.

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

109.6(4)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.
-- Number not in compliance: 9 The center had mistakenly identified a 3 year renewal period rather than the required 2

year renewal period.

109.10(14)a: The center and supervisor shall ensure that staff knows names and number of children assigned. Staff shall provide careful supervision.
-- School age children were allowed to exit the classroom to use restrooms to change into swimming suits without staff accompanying or watching the children to ensure that they did not leave the center. Children must be within direct line of sight and sound of staff at all times.

109.11(2)a: The center will provide sufficient and safe indoor play equipment, materials, and furniture. It must meet the developmental, activity and special needs of the children.
-- Items and toys with parts that can break off which would be considered choking hazards need to be removed from classrooms serving children under 3 year of age.

109.11(4)a: Center must have safe outdoor program area adjacent to the center, with sufficient square footage to accommodate at least 30 percent of the enrollment capacity at any one time at 75 spear feet per child. Outdoor space must:Be free from litter and unsafe materials and free from contamination by the drainage or ponding of sewage or storm water.Include safe play equipment and an area of shade.Include fencing to protect from bodies of water or vehicular traffic.
-- The disc climbing element of the outdoor playground climbing structure had a loose retaining bolt that needs to be tightened before children are allowed to play on that element.

109.11(8)c: All centers: Annual inspection prior to heating season of all fuel-burning appliances to reduce risk of carbon monoxide poisoning and shall install one carbon monoxide detector on each floor that conforms to UL Standard 2034.
-- Tested levels exceeded the maximum allowable cutoff limit. Renewed testing was being conducted to verify long term daily averages.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

A full license will remain in effect at this time. Please provide a written response to the licensing consultant identifying a plan of action to correct and maintain those issued cited as not meeting licensing standards and anticipated date by which corrections will be completed. At least one visit will be made to the center during the next year.

*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.