Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Early Beginnings Atkins Inc

Provider No.: 39552

Address: 402 Cardinal AVE, Atkins, IA, 52206

County: Benton

Director's Name: Bree Hepker

On-Site Supervisor: Molly Stark

Phone Number: 3194466060

E-Mail: earlybeginningsa@gmail.com

HHS Visit Date: 08/06/2025

Licensing Period: 09/01/2024 to 09/01/2026

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 07/13/2023

Comments:

Report Visit Type:

- [ ] PTO
- [ ] Licensing Visit
- [ ] Drop In
- [ ] Administrative Change

License Type:

- [X] Full
- [ ] Provisional

Quality initiative:

Quality Rating: 3

- [ ] Accrediation

Program Duration:

- [X] Year-Round
- [ ] School Year
- [ ] Summer Only

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Program Population Served:

- [ ] Infant(0-<24 Months)
- [ ] Toddler
- [ ] PreSchool
- [ ] School Age
- [X] All Ages

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Aged	Capacity
General	24	16	40	45	125
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

Early Beginnings Atkins Inc offers year-round full-time childcare and preschool services to infants through school-age. Current enrollment is 96.

Multi-site owner/director Bree Hepker has an AA Degree in Early Childhood Education, over 20 years of experience as childcare center director, and continues to participates in much child development related training. Molly Stark is the on-site supervisor of Early Beginnings Akins Inc. Ms. Stark has an AA Degree in Business Management, over 15 years working with children and continues to participate in much child development related training. Since the last review, Ms. Hepker and Ms. Stark both obtained the National Administrator Credential (NAC).

On 8/6/2025, building, grounds and program space were observed to all be in good repair. Upon arriving to the childcare on this day, a butterfly habitat was observed to be greeting children and their families. Management shared how children with their families have been able to view the metamorphosis and release of 21 butterflies so far this season. On the day of the monitoring visit, areas of study included summertime and carnival games. Evidence of previous recent days' work included displayed "one in a melon" footprint child art and individual Leaning Tower of Pisa child projects. It was noteworthy, that outdoor bird feeders were observed to be strategically placed so that children could regularly enjoy an up-close bird viewing! Throughout the building and grounds on 8/6/2025, staff were observed to be in ratio and actively engaged with the children in a variety of activities that included infant cares, carrying out curriculum (word search puzzles, bubbles, book reading, small group circle discussion, crafting), food rituals, routine transitions and outdoor play.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

The goal of Early Beginnings Inc "... is to provide the highest quality care to your child every day. We will do this be providing developmentally appropriate activities in a safe and nurturing environment..." Early Beginnings Inc has been in operation since 2000 and is celebrating their 25th year being in business. Congratulations!

Early Beginnings Atkins Inc participates in quality initiatives including IQ4K.

Multi-site owner/director Ms. Hepker is a local entrepreneur invested in the city of Atkins and surrounding community. Ms. Hepker continues to be a childcare mentor (e.g. college students, other childcare) and has established relationships with other childcare management/directors. Management and ownership of Early Beginnings Inc have remained consistent since opening 25 years ago. As of 8/6/2025, the program's management team (e.g. Ms. Hepker, Ms. Stark) remains organized and has noteworthy systems of organization in place to help ensure administrative items are completed as required and maintained in a secure manner. The management team is knowledgeable of licensing guidelines as well as their own program's policies and procedures. Many staff throughout the classrooms are seasoned and reported celebrating 12 years,

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11 years, 10 years, 3 years, and 1 year of employment with this childcare. Ms. Hepker and Ms. Stark talked about having an exceptional team of staff including returning seasonal staff. Ms. Hepker and Ms. Stark both acknowledged receiving positive family feedback that includes how their children are excited to see familiar staff faces.

Early Beginnings Atkins Inc has parent-staff-program information centers, utilizes technological communication resources, and offers family programming activities. Curriculum includes a combination of learning strategies including incorporating teacher-created ideas, early learning standards, phonics work, math concepts, small and large gross motor, school-age summer literacy events, imaginative play experiences, and crafts. Curriculum also incorporates added enrichments of field trips, guest speakers, themed days, and seasonal-holiday parties.

Early Beginnings Atkins Inc continues to have and update as needed policies and procedures that includes those for safety, daily health checks, hand washing, diapering, cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting. On 8/6/2025, management acknowledged how their team of staff including the center chef help ensure the children's space is sanitary and hazard free each day.

Early Beginnings Atkins has emergency plans, policies, and procedures. The program has successfully navigated through Benton County flooding events, the 2019 winter Polar Vortex, 2019 health (covid-19) pandemic, 8/10/20 Derecho Storm, 2021 food supply issues, 2022 infant formula shortages, air quality alerts (2023, 2025) and 7/19/24 global technology outage.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

N/A

4. Any corrective action plans, provisional license, and safety plans-steps to get into compliance

N/A

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

Continue to improve health and sanitation by installing hands-free sensor faucets at all sinks that do not already have this feature.

Install door finger pinch guards on all doors to help prevent chil finger pinching-laceration hazards.

To help with the items in this report's special notes, please apply for the "Growing Iowa" fund designed to support child care in Iowa by connecting with the local CCR&R (https://iowaccrr.org/staff/).

The program's license remains in full status. All DHS licensing standards and procedures must be maintained during the renewal period.

Date: 09/12/2025

HHS Licensing Consultant: Amy Lyons

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**.