Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Step Ahead Child Care & Preschool

Provider No.: 47932

Address: 2635 Berkshire Pkwy Ste 200, Clive, IA, 50325

County: Polk

Director's Name: Crystal Steffen and Anna Zwiefel

On-Site Supervisor: Cheryl Halas

Phone Number: 5159876991

E-Mail: anna@stepaheadchildcare.org

HHS Visit Date: 10/20/2026

Licensing Period: 12/01/2026 to 12/01/2028

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 10/09/2025

Comments: Clive Marshal Marshal . Fire Marshal inspections are due at least every three years for licensing. An inspection was completed on the new building on the above date.

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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HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*
Sunday			
Monday	6:30 AM to 5:30 PM		
Tuesday	6:30 AM to 5:30 PM		
Wednesday	6:30 AM to 5:30 PM		
Thursday	6:30 AM to 5:30 PM		
Friday	6:30 AM to 5:30 PM		
Saturday			

Program Population Served:

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

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Aged	Capacity
General	28	21	52	0	101
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

A licensing inspection was conducted on 10/20/26. The owner/director and co-director were both present for this inspection.

All areas of the program were observed. These areas observed consisted of classroom observations and activities, ratios, nutritional practices, health and safety practices, playground observation, field trip and transportation practices, and administrative review.

Step Ahead Child Care and Preschool was given permission to open on 10/24/16. The center moved into a new building in 10/2025 just across the parking lot from the from the previous center building. The center serves children six weeks in age to five/six years in age using the Iowa Early Learning Standards Curriculum. Hours of operation are 6:30am - 5:30pm Monday through Friday and year-round. In the new building, there are five classrooms. Capacities are as followed:

0 -18 months: 12 children.
6 - 24 months: 16 children.
24 - 36 months: 21 children.
Three year old: 26 children.
Four/Five year old: 26 children.

Total child enrollment on the day of the inspection was 86 children.

The owner and head director of the program is Crystal Steffen. Crystal has an AA degree in Business Administration.

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Crystal also has past experience working in child care. The co-director is Anna Zwiefel. Anna has a BA degree as well as past experience working in child care. Cheryl Halas is the on-site supervisor and meets the qualifications for her position.

NUTRITION: The center provides breakfast, lunch, and a PM snack to children. The food menu rotates every five weeks. The center has a kitchen where meals are prepared and they have a full-time cook. Children eat in their classrooms at the child-size tables and chairs. All food storage was sufficient.

TRANSPORTATION/FIELD TRIPS: The center does not go on field trips other than to the nearby park behind the building. Children's emergency contacts and a first-aid kit are taken along to the park. The center will bring agencies into the program for presentations to children.

PLAYGROUND: The center has their own fenced in playground connected to the building. The center also utilizes the public park next door to the center for older children. No issues were noted with any playground equipment on the center playground. Trees provide shade. Monthly playground inspections are being conducted.

During the inspection, most of the children were napping as the inspection took place in the early afternoon. In the preschool classroom, children were eating lunch at the child-size tables and chairs. Children stated they washed their hands before sitting down to eat. Children also acknowledged doing monthly fire and tornado drills and gave specific answers as to where they relocate to for these drills. Toys, tables, cots, cribs, and other equipment are being cleaned and sanitized daily. Diapering tables are being disinfected after each use.

For more challenging child behaviors, management puts an emphasis on being present and stepping in to assist when needed. Management also role models for other staff during challenging times. De-escalation techniques are discussed and practiced by staff. Teamwork and communication and stressed between staff, staff and children, and staff and parents. The goal is to be proactive rather than reactive if possible.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

The center utilizes CCR&R and their nurse consultant on a regular basis.

Monthly staff meetings are held.

The center has a website, Facebook page, and Instagram page. The center also utilizes the application, Teams, for internal communication and Brightwheel and Mid Sioux for parents.

There is a good mix of tenured and new staff. Staff reportedly work well together.

There is a secure entrance into the building.

The new building has a lot of natural light and classrooms are spacious.

The center was clean and nicely decorated.

One parent-teacher conferences is held each year. Parents are highly encouraged to participate in center activities and questionnaires on ways to continue to make the center a good experience for parents.

The center has good community partnerships.

Assessments are recorded at specific times throughout the year for children ages three to five.

Enrollment remains steady. There is a wait list for enrollment.

The owner has her NAC.

The center employs a full-time cook.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

109.7(1): All staff (within first three months of employment):Iowa's training for the mandatory reporting of child abuse. At least one hour of training regarding universal precautions. Certification in First Aid infant, child, and adult cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) or equivalent certification approved by the Department. A valid certificate indicating the date of training and expiration date shall be maintained. Certification in infant, child, and adult first aid that uses a nationally recognized curriculum or is received from a nationally recognized training organization including the American Red Cross, American Heart Association, American Safety and Health Institute, or MEDIC First Aid or an equivalent certification approved by the Department. A valid certificate indicating the date of training and expiration date shall be maintained. Minimum health and safety trainings, (Essentials) approved by the Department. If significant changes occur to content, the Department may require the training be renewed.
----------One staff member has Essentials training now, but it was done after the 90 day deadline.
----------Another staff member did not have their Mandatory Reporter certificate in their file or I - Power.

109.11(2)b: Program space must meet the following conditions: Room must be arranged so as not to obstruct the direct observation of children by staff. Individual covered mats, bed, or cots and appropriate bedding will be provided for all children who nap. Equipment and materials are maintained in a sanitary manner. Sufficient spacing must be maintained. The center will have sufficient toilet articles for each child for hand washing.
----------In the preschool, room, children's bedding was touching each other while in storage.

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

N/A.

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

Radon testing will be needed in all classrooms in the new building prior to 10/27/26. If levels are below 4.0, the center can move to testing for radon at least every five years. So long as radon levels remain below 4.0, they can remain on a five year plan. If at the next testing, levels in any classroom come back 4.0 or higher, the center will have to have a mitigation plan, retest, and at least temporarily move back to testing every two years. THE CENTER PLANS TO TEST FOR RADON IN ALL CLASSROOM THIS COMING WEEKEND (10/23/26 - 10/25/26).

The annual furnace inspection was conducted a couple of weeks per the owner and director. They are waiting on the paperwork. With moving into a new building, the deadline for this inspection was 10/27/26.

For nutrition, vanilla wafers were listed as one of the past meal items. If these are not whole grain (listed as the first ingredient), then they won't be considered credible per CACFP requirements.

It is recommended the bolts on the center playground fence that are up higher also be cut/capped.

I-Power was discussed at the inspection. Mandatory Reporter as well as First-Aid/CPR will have to be manually uploaded into individual I-Power profiles. There are videos and instructions if needed on the CCR&R website on I - Power.

A new, full, two-year license is recommended. The application and payment was sent in on 10/19/26.

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Date: 10/21/2026

HHS Licensing Consultant: Nate Knepper

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**.