

CHILD CARE CENTER COMPLAINT

Name of Center: Sugar Babies South	Enrollment: 45	License ID: 52702
Street: 2102 King AVE	City: Des Moines	IA Zip Code: 50320 County: Polk
Mailing Address: 2102 King AVE		
Mailing City: Des Moines	IA Zip Code: 50320	
Director's Name: Lenae Arku	Center Phone Number: 515-428-0082	
On-Site Supervisors: samika Gates	E-Mail Address: sugarbabiesacademyabc123@gmail.com	

Date of Complaint: 11-05-2025**Date of Visit:** 11-12-2025
☒ Scheduled

 ☐ Unannounced

 ☐ NA

☒ Non-Compliance with Regulations Found

 ☐ Compliance with Regulations Found
RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE☒ 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 ☒ NoDid this complaint result in a death to a child? ☐ Yes ☒ No**Summary of Complaint:**

On 11/5/25 Sugar Babies South Staff sent four children between 6 and 9 years old to what staff believed was the apartment of the children's maternal aunt, without authorization to do so and without notifying the children's parent. The children were alone in a dark apartment building parking lot for an unknown duration.

Licensing Rules Relevant to the Complaint:

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.

109.9(1)a All files contain:Copy of a department criminal history record check form or any other permission form approved by Department of Public Safety for conducting an Iowa or national criminal history record checkCopy of a request for child abuse information form, when applicable.Copies of results of Iowa record checks conducted through the SING for review by the department upon request.Copies of national criminal history check results.Any department issued documents sent to the center related to a record check, regardless of findings.

109.9(1)c All files contain documentation to indicate that ongoing staff training requirements are met, including current certifications in first aid/CPR and mandatory child abuse training.

109.9(2)a-c All files contain sufficient information to allow the center to contact the parent or emergency contact at any time child is in center's care as well as who can pick up the child as authorized by the parent.

109.10(13)c Center shall develop procedures for annual staff and volunteer training on emergency plans.

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109.10(14)a The center and supervisor shall ensure that staff knows names and number of children assigned. Staff shall provide careful supervision.

Inspection Findings:

On 11/7/25, this consultant contacted Lenae initially in regards matters unrelated to this complaint in relation to her other centers (Lenae owns four other centers and this center) and then the reported concerns. This consultant stated he would be in contact to schedule a time to come out to the center and interview staff. Lenae stated she did not know this was going on (kids being allowed to walk home alone from the center) and admitted that it is not acceptable.

On 11/12/25, this consultant along with HHS worker, Jonah Parks, made a scheduled visit to the center to interview staff. Lenae was not present for this visit despite this consultant requesting she be present. This consultant later spoke to Lenae by phone. HHS worker, Parks, also spoke to Lenae by phone and email to request door bell video footage of the day/time the children were allowed to walk to an apartment complex by themselves.

HHS worker Parks and this consultant interviewed staff members MNC, DJ, and SE individually in the office. SE stated that it was ultimately she who allowed the children to walk home by themselves to the apartment complex next door and she was not aware that the children's aunt was not home until after the fact. Disciplinary action was taken in the form of a written warning for SE. This is not allowed even if parents request that children walk home from their center. Because of SE's actions, there was a portion of time the children did not have staff supervision. The center is FOUND TO BE IN NON-COMPLIANCE WITH LICENSING REGULATION 109.10(14)A AS IT PERTAINS TO SUPERVISION.

Throughout the course of the investigation, the following licensing violations were also found/observed:

109.9(2)a-c. All four children's files were missing. Staff stated the mother of the children took them. This should not have been allowed as these files are staff property and needed for licensing.

109.9(1)c:

1. One staff SING certificate clearly showed an evaluation was needed. It was clearly visible and in red ink that a further evaluation was needed prior to this employee starting. This staff member had been working since 7/2025. This worker was suspended until the further evaluation was completed. This worker was ultimately cleared to resume working.
2. Fingerprint results were missing in staff files. Ms. Arku stated that "maybe" there were located at one of her other centers. These need to be onsite and/or readily available and they were not.

109.9(1)c: All three staff files were missing all or parts of ongoing training certificates. These were not found in I - Power (despite Ms. Arku being told numerous times that all staff need I - Power profiles and be uploading training). These training certificates were also not printed off and in individual files. Ms. Arku stated that staff have been keeping their certificates in their own personal cell phones. This is not and has never been allowed as an acceptable option.

109.7(1). One staff member was past their initial 90 days of having all initial training requirements completed.

109.10(13)c: During interviews, staff denied reviewing the center handbooks along with all emergency procedures. There also was no documentation that staff had done so upon their initial orientations.

Special Notes and Action Required:

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Lenae was informed that the center would be found to be in non-compliance with licensing regulation related to this complaint as well as the other violations observed when this consultant and HHS worker, Parks, were at the center to interview staff. This consultant informed Lenae that it is absolutely unacceptable to let children walk home alone even if a parent requests it (there seems to be sufficient evidence that the mother, who also used to work at this center, would call and request her children be allowed to walk to the nearby apartment complex near the center where an aunt resides). There is a pattern of disregard with this particular center with following/knowing licensing regulations in the short amount of time this center has been open for business. Continued non-compliance with these type of licensing regulations will most likely result in the center being downgraded to a provisional license in the future, which could then lead to revocation of the center license, which would then result in permanent closure of the center.

As shared many times with Ms. Arku, CCR&R is also available to assist programs be more successful. Lenae, in the past, has seemed to be hesitant and/or inconsistent with utilizing these services despite this consultant encouraging her often to do so.

*****All staff will need to review the center handbooks (including emergency plans) as well as the licensing regulations so that they are familiar with them. Signed/dated documentation will also be needed in staff files that this has taken place.*****

If you are the Child Care Center Director and you feel something is unclear or unjustly cited, please contact your consultant at 515-362-7832 or email Nathan.Knepper@hhs.iowa.gov so that we may discuss the issue. You may also send a letter that will be included in your licensing file noting any disagreement you may have with this report.

*Note: If you are a member of the general public, there may be additional information contained in the public file. You may contact the HHS Licensing Consultant to inquire.

Consultant's Signature:

Nate Knepper

Date:

12-11-2025