Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: First Steps Academy

Provider No.: 52828

Address: 806 Main St, Boyden, IA, 51234

County: Sioux

Director's Name: Shelby Kooima

On-Site Supervisor: Jaydrien Ullrich

Phone Number: 7126315877

E-Mail: firststepsacademy24@gmail.com

HHS Visit Date: 04/21/2026

Licensing Period: 06/01/2025 to 05/01/2027

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 04/21/2025

Comments: Shelby Kooima is leaving this center to pursue a teaching career. This center has hired a new director Morgan Mueller who will begin working near the end of May 2026. Morgan is a current director, and this transition should go smoothly. I will enter new director name once IPOWER approval has been made.

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

Health and Human Services

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CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

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

Program Population Served:

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

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Aged	Capacity
General	8	8	10		26
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

I completed an unannounced visit at this center on 04/21/26. I spoke with Jaydrien Ullrich, the onsite supervisor, as Director Shelby Kooima is currently completing student teaching. Ms. Ullrich holds an associate's degree in business management and has five years of experience working in other high-quality childcare programs, which provides her with strong perspective on delivering quality care to children. Shelby continues to demonstrate strong organizational skills as the program director.

The center has a well-written parent handbook and staff handbook. These documents reflect the requirements of the HHS Licensing Manual, and the program's code of ethics aligns with NAEYC standards, which promote high-quality practices in childcare.

All areas of the program were observed, including classroom environments and activities, nutritional practices, health and safety procedures, playground areas, field trip and transportation practices, and administrative records. The center currently has 30 children enrolled, with 8 children present during the visit.

When the center first opened, it primarily served preschool-age children but transitioned quickly to include infants and toddlers to better meet the needs of the community. The program uses a theme-based curriculum with a Bible focus. During today's visit, activities centered on Earth Day. Staff connected Bible verses to the learning activities. I observed staff and children engaged in creating flower seed balls with water and other materials. The children were highly engaged, enthusiastic, and able to explain the process and expected outcomes, including how watering the seed balls would help the flowers grow. A posted schedule was observed, and the weekly theme included the story of the Good Samaritan, which provides children with positive character lessons and helps reinforce kindness and empathy throughout their daily activities.

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Visual supports were displayed throughout the classrooms, including colors, the alphabet, numbers, and children's artwork. Classroom spaces were well arranged with defined learning areas. Quiet areas for reading, dramatic play materials, and age-appropriate toys were observed, all in good repair. The center places emphasis on developing children's social-emotional skills, including supporting problem solving and building healthy self-esteem. I observed positive, developmentally appropriate interactions between staff and children. Staff were welcoming, engaged, and worked to create a warm and supportive environment.

I observed warm, attentive interactions in the infant room. Staff followed all safe sleep guidelines and demonstrated the ability to multitask while still remaining fully present with the infants, promoting both safety and secure attachment.

Medication is stored securely in a locked box or otherwise out of children's reach. No children are currently receiving medication. The first aid kit is stocked appropriately for treating minor injuries. Fire and tornado drills are documented monthly. Radon testing and the annual heating inspection are complete. The center has a functioning carbon monoxide detector. All program areas were clean, orderly, and well maintained.

Although the center is not currently on the CCFAP program, they follow CCFAP nutritional guidelines. The kitchen was clean, and appropriate sanitizing practices were observed. Meals are served in one designated room, and staff sit with the children to model family-style dining.

The playground was observed and is fenced with a turf surface. The turf includes field-style markings that make the space enjoyable for children. New outdoor toys have been added, including a covered sandbox. A tree in the middle of the playground provides natural shade. The center uses the Brightwheel app for parent communication. Staff take a clipboard with emergency contact information when children are off the main premises. The center does not provide transportation but participates in community outings, especially during the summer, including programs and library visits.

The program's current goal is to work toward achieving IQ4K certification.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

This is the only licensed center in Boyden and serves as an important resource for the community. The center has built strong connections with local schools, including coordinating with them for busing needs. The director also attends open house events at the local school to support positive relationships and maintain open communication with families.

This center is actively working with CCR&R for IQ4K certification. IQ4K is Iowa's quality improvement system for early childhood programs. Working toward certification means the center is actively strengthening its practices in areas like curriculum, safety, staff training, and family partnerships. This shows a commitment to continuous growth and providing high-quality care for the community.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

109.9(2)d: All files contain sufficient information and authorization to allow the center to secure emergency medical and dental services at any time child is in center's care.

109.13(5): Centers shall ensure that food preparation and storage procedures are consistent with the recommendations of the CACFPs.

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

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

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Targeted Assessment: Behavior Management

I discussed with onsite Jaydrien about their oversight of behavior management related to helping childcare staff: 1) Understand expectations, 2) managing frustrations, 3) monitor performance.

Jaydrien shared that this is a small center within a close-knit community, where staff often know many of the families they serve. The staff work well together and communicate openly, including sharing when they feel frustrated and reaching out for support when needed. Jaydrien noted that having consistent staff in each room is a strength, as it helps build strong relationships with the children. The center maintains an open-door policy for staff to ask for help at any time, and Jaydrien checks in with classrooms throughout the day to offer assistance as needed. The center also utilizes cameras to support teaching moments and help staff reflect on practices to prevent incidents.

Center is working on a radon mitigation plan. Please keep me informed of this process.

A full license is recommended at this time.

At least one visit will be made to the center during the next year.

Date: 04/22/2026

HHS Licensing Consultant: Leann Steinhauer

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**.