

CHILD CARE CENTER COMPLAINT

Name of Center: Stepping Stones Learning Center LLC	Enrollment: 53	License ID: 20495
Street: 2205 2nd AVE	City: Muscatine	IA Zip Code: 52761
County: Muscatine		
Mailing Address: 2205 2nd AVE		
Mailing City: Muscatine	IA Zip Code: 52761	
Director's Name: Shawna Martin	Center Phone Number: 563-264-1871	
On-Site Supervisors: Assistant Director: Jacob Martin	E-Mail Address: daycare97@machlink.com	

Date of Complaint: 08-18-2026**Date of Visit:** 08-24-2026
☐ 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:**

-A two-year-old child had unexplained bruises on their upper and lower arms. These bruises did not appear to be caused by typical active two-year-old clumsiness, normal play, or accidental interactions with other children. Mandatory reporters were made aware; however, it was not reported.

-A three-year-old child was forcibly slammed down on carpet. The staff then grabbed the child by the arm and swung the child. The child almost hit a bookshelf but did not. The child was not physically injured. It was shared that this was not first time and not first child the staff did this to. She was suspended for 2 days. Mandatory reporters were made aware; however, it was not reported.

Licensing Rules Relevant to the Complaint:

109.4(1) Written policies on: Enrollment and discharge. Field trips and non-center activities. Discipline/Behavior/Biting. Nutrition. Health and safety policies. Transportation if applicable. Assurance people do not have unauthorized access to children at the center. Protecting children's confidentiality.

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.

109.12(2)a-d The center shall not use as a form of discipline: Center does not use corporal punishment including spanking, shaking, or slapping. Punishment which is humiliating or frightening or causes pain or discomfort is not allowed. Children shall never be locked in a room or closet. When restraints are part of a treatment plan for a child with a disability authorized by a parent and a psychologist or psychiatrist, staff shall receive training on the safe and appropriate use of the restraint. Punishment or threat of punishment associated with illness, toilet training, or food or rest is not to be used. No child is subject to verbal abuse, threats, derogatory remarks about child or child's family.

Inspection Findings:

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HHS Worker Aguilar and this worker arrived at the center. The following is based upon a face-to-face interview with the director, assistant director, and staff. Review of administrative items, review of video footage and observations while on-site.

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The following concerns were reported:

- A child acts scared of a staff member.
- A child has thrown up when they hear they must go to another classroom.
- There are staff that yell at children loudly and uses a "stern and scary voice."
- There are staff that do yell too much.
- There are staff who are rough and raise their voices a lot.
- There are staff that do a lot of yelling, and the yelling consists of telling the children to pick up toys.
- There are staff that need to calm down. A staff member can be "antsy and uptight" and expects children to be older than what they are.
- There are staff that will "go off on children", and there are other times when they have grabbed a few other children. Children are usually grabbed by the back of the arm, and by the wrist.
- A staff has called children's names and pushed them away - calling them "idiots, dumb a**".
- A staff screams at the children as if they are "fully grown" and tells them "no" or "knock it off".
- A staff screams so loudly you can hear it from the other side of the building.
- A staff would put children in time-out for having a bathroom accident.
- A staff has thrown and tossed a child, hit a child's hand, and grabbed a child with their arms. Marks were not observed.
- A staff grabbed a child by the arm and placed the child somewhere else.
- A staff admitted that there have been times when they have grabbed a child wrong, and there are other times when they grabbed them to prevent them from hurting themselves. The staff shared when she they grabbed someone wrong it is usually because that child has hit a different child and she grabs them before that occurs. She shared that the director had talked to them about grabbing children.
- A write up form stated that a staff swung the child by the arm and the child almost collided with a bookshelf.
- On this date this worker was sitting in a break room and could hear staff yelling, telling the children "no, stop, come here, etc."

109.4(1) Written policies on: Discipline/Behavior/Biting. VIOLATED.

-The center does have a policy however it was not consistently followed by staff. The center director must review this policy with each staff and have them initial that they understand the discipline policies.

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. VIOLATED.

-The center director, assistant director, and staff had mandatory reporter posting; however, they have failed to report and completed their own investigation. Mandatory reporters must report child abuse; it is not their job to complete an investigation.

Special Notes and Action Required:

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The center has had several complaints in regard to inappropriate discipline. This occurred in 8/2026, 4/2025, 12, 2022, and 6/2022. This worker has recommended the following in the past. Working with CCR&R consultant, working with CCR&R behavioral Health Specialist, training for staff and developing calm down areas.

The center directors and staff will complete a training on discipline.

-This will be added to their employee file by 12/1/2026.

<https://extension.psu.edu/programs/betterkidcare/search?SearchableText=discipline>

The center is strongly encouraged to:

-Purchase some resources for the classrooms on coping skills/calm down areas.

<https://pocketofpreschool.com/social-emotional> <https://www.booksbythebushel.com/>

-Set up a monthly meeting with their CCR&R consultant. Audrie Aden: aaden@caeiowa.org or 563-940-9927

-Set up a meeting with Tricia Shannon the Behavioral Health Specialist from CCR&R. (563) 484 4605 or tshannon@caeiowa.org

-Establish a calm-down space and training staff on how to utilize these spaces.

Resources for all staff/center:

-Calm down area:

https://challengingbehavior.org/docs/Calm-Down-Area_Tipsheet.pdf

<https://hes-extraordinary.com/calm-down-corner>

-Child Emotional Regulation Articles

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resource/mindfulness-practices-for-families>

<https://headstart.gov/browse/tag/mindfulness?page=0>

-How to make small classrooms feel larger:

<https://blog.kaplanco.com/small-classroom-design-organization>

<https://www.earlylearningventures.org/classroom-layout-guide/>

-Staff Emotional Regulation Articles:

<https://headstart.gov/browse/tag/staff-mental-health>

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resource/caring-for-yourself-while-you-care-for-your-children/>

-The center director and assistant director must take Mandatory Reporter Training over again. This will be added to their file by 12/1/2026.

-They will also work with CCR&R to develop a new policy on Mandatory Reporting.

The law requires you to report suspected child abuse to the HHS orally within 24 hours of becoming aware of the situation. The law requires the reporting of suspected child abuse. It is not the reporter's role to validate the abuse. The law does not require you to have proof that the abuse occurred before reporting. The law clearly specifies that reports of child abuse must be made when the person reporting "reasonably believes a child has suffered abuse."

Sanctions for Failure to Report Child Abuse: Iowa Code section 232.75 provides for civil and criminal sanctions for failing to report child abuse. Any person, official, agency, or institution required by this chapter to report a suspected case of child abuse who knowingly and willfully fails to do so is guilty of a simple misdemeanor. Any person, official, agency, or institution required by Iowa Code section 232.69 to report a suspected case of child abuse who knowingly fails to do so, or who knowingly interferes with the making of such a report in violation of section 232.70, is civilly liable for the damages proximately caused by such failure or interference.

Consultant's Signature:

Heidi Brown

Date:

10-08-2026