**Iowa Department of Human Services**

**CHILD CARE CENTER COMPLAINT**

**Name of Center:** Loud House Learning Center **Enrollment:** 57 **License ID:** 52455

**Street:** 204 G Avenue **City:** Grundy Center **IA** **Zip Code:** 50638 **County:** Grundy

**Mailing Address:** 204 G Avenue

**Mailing City:** Grundy Center **IA** **Zip Code:** 50638

**Director's Name:** Brandy Hippen **Center Phone Number:** 319-825-4694

**On-Site Supervisors:** **E-Mail Address:** loudhouselearningcenter@gmail.com

**Date of Complaint:** 08-01-2024 **Date of Visit:** 08-02-2024

**[ ]** Scheduled **[X]** Unannounced **[ ]** NA

**[X]** Non-Compliance with Regulations Found **[ ]** Compliance with Regulations Found

**RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE**

**[X] NO CHANGES to licensing status recommended**

**[ ] PROVISIONAL license from** **to**

**[ ] SUSPENSION of License**

**[ ] REVOCATION of License**

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**Complaint Details:**

Did this complaint result in a serious injury? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Did this complaint result in a death to a child? ☐ Yes ☒ No

**Summary of Complaint:**

A complaint was received that a preschool age child attending the Loud House Learning Center was not being supervised and was allowed to leave the playground and pet a cat in the parking lot of the center for several minutes before staff realized she was gone. It was further reported that the child was then taken into the infant room where the child was put in a crib. It was also reported that the center is also understaffed and combining all ages of children with one employee for all age groups, and giving an example of 20-25 children going to the fair with only 2 staff.

**Licensing Rules Relevant to the Complaint:**

109.8(2) Ratio maintained in center as required by age.

109.10(16)a The center and supervisor shall ensure that staff knows names and number of children assigned. Staff shall provide careful supervision.

109.11(2) A safe and properly equipped area is provided for infants that does not allow for intrusion by children over two years of age.
Children over age two who remain in the infant area are placed at the recommendation of a physician or AEA due to a significant developmental delay. Children are placed for a limited time with DHS approval if doing so does not pose a threat to the infants.

109.12(2)b Punishment which is humiliating or frightening or causes pain or discomfort is not allowed. Mechanical restrains shall never be used. If part of a treatment plan for a child with a disability, staff shall receive training.

**Inspection Findings:**

An unannounced visit was made to the Loud House Learning Center on 08-02-24 where DHHS co-worker Kari Chamberlain and I met with the center director Brandy Hippen. Brandy was informed of the complaint and stated she was aware of the incident but had been at the store picking up supplies at the time. Brandy was able to identify the staff who had been involved with the situation. Brandy stated that an incident report had been completed and copies of that report were provided. The report does identify the date as 07-31-24 with no time of the incident being documented but that the parents were notified at 9:00 AM. The narrative of the report identified that the child had tried to leave the classroom 4 times

earlier in the morning and then when going outside the child attempted to hit and kick peers, then attempted to run off the front deck, and when brought inside tried to escape.

We were able to speak to JS who was the teacher identified as having been the classroom teacher for the child identified in the complaint. JS was informed of the complaint and asked if she could relate what had happened. JS stated that she was with the 4 year old preschool classroom that morning. JS stated that during breakfast the child the child stated she needed to use the restroom which is located just outside the room where breakfast was being served. JS stated that the child did try to run down the hallway but she was able to catch the child. JS stated that this happened a couple times. JS stated that after breakfast the class went outside to the big playground and the child continued to have behavioral problems being aggressive with peers and she did try to calm the child down. JS stated that the child did go onto the deck, went down the stairs, and was on the grass by the building when she caught the child. It was clarified that the child was moving toward the parking lot on the West side of the building but did not reach the parking lot, and was on the grass between the sidewalk and the building. It was also clarified that there was no cat present and that the child was not petting a cat at anytime. JS stated that she returned the child to the playground and moved her class to the smaller playground where she requested the teacher for that group (BS), and the center cook watch the rest of the class while she took the child back into the center to Amy, who was the on-site supervisor. JS stated that Amy was working in the infant room. JS stated that she, Amy, and the other infant room teacher kept the child in the infant room while they contacted and waited for the child's parents to arrive. JS stated there are 3 exits from the classroom and each teacher stood by an exit to prevent the child from running from the room. JS stated that the child did continue to have behavioral issues taking her shoes off and throwing them, scratching JS, and pushing an empty crib into another crib with a sleeping infant. JS was asked about the concern of the child being placed in a crib. JS stated that the child was never placed in a crib. JS stated that a crib had been moved in front of one of the exits to help block the exit and the child did try climbing the crib but was unable to. JS stated that initially they ignored the child behavior, but then began talking to her asking about various topics to distract the child, and as the child began to calm down she became very interested learning how bottles are prepared for the infants when one of the teachers began doing that task.

JS was asked about any special care plans or guidance that has been provided for the child. JS stated she was not aware of any plans, and provided the same care activities that she provides to the other children. JS was asked about the center policies regarding children running from the classroom. JS stated that there had been a recent situation in which another child had eloped from the center and they did have a staff meeting following that in which they discussed what to do if a child is missing or runs from the center. JS identified that this included responses regarding ensuring coverage of the other children, search protocols, and other actions that would be an after the fact response rather than proactive guidance on how to reduce the risk of a child going missing or eloping from the center.

We next spoke with Amy Stahl who confirmed she had been the on-site supervisor at the time of the incident. Amy stated she had been working in the infant room when JS brought the child in and told her the child was trying to run away. Amy stated that she texted the owner, and director about the situation, and that the director then contacted the family to come pick up the child. Amy stated that while they were in the infant room waiting for the family the child continued to have behavioral issues and trying to escape from the room. Amy provided the same basic history as provided by JS regarding the child being aggressive with JS, pushing an empty crib into an occupied crib, and trying to climb over a crib to get out of the room. Amy also denied that the child was ever able to climb into, or was ever placed into a crib.

We also spoke with the other staff that was identified as being in the infant room, and the preschool teacher that had the other group of children on the play. Both provided consistent statements with had been reported by Brandy, Amy, and JS. The preschool teacher (BS) confirmed that she had not observed the situation of the child attempting to leave the playground, but that JS had brought her group over to the small playground area where she was with her class and asked her and the center cook to watch them. The other teacher, (ND), confirmed she had been asked to stand by one of the exits from the infant room and again confirmed the same observed behavioral interactions and denied that the child had been placed or climbed into a crib at any time.

With regard to the other identified concerns all staff provided consistent and credible information. All staff denied that they have ever had a time where they were out of ratio in their classrooms. All staff agree that the center does combine children including infants and older children at the start and end of the day when there are just a few children at the center as allowed by Licensing Standards. All staff confirmed that the school age children were allowed to attend a city celebration, and a county fair, but not the preschool or younger age children. All staff confirmed that the required staff to child ratio plus one additional staff was met for those activities. All staff confirmed that the children going to those activities had made use of a center owned van which would have limited the group size to 10 children plus the 3 staff that went.

While at the center we did observe the playground area. The center is located on the corner of a busy

highway, and a residential street. The playground is fully fenced on all sides and have a deck on the front (highway facing north side) of the building that does have a railing. The deck does have an open stair leading to the public right of way that is not gated. The playground as noted by staff is divided into two areas with a fence and gate between them. One area is a larger space with access to climbing structures and the deck on the front of the building. The other is a smaller space with a sandbox, and other equipment at the back (south side) of the building with access to the kitchen area. There is parking for the building located along the West and South sides of the building.

Based on the information obtained this complaint is SUBSTANTIATIATED for violation of Licensing Standard 109.11(2) which among other things requires that a safe and properly equipped area is provided for infants that does not allow for intrusion by children over two years of age. All parties agree that the child identified in the complaint was in the school age classroom and 5 years of age. All parties agree that the child was taken into the infant room in response to having behavioral issues and to seek the assistance of the on-site supervisor. All parties agree that the child was maintained in that are for a period of time by staff standing and blocking exits while waiting for the child's parents to arrive. All parties agree that during that time the child continued to have behavioral issues including removing and throwing her shoes, scratching JS, and pushing an empty crib into another crib with a sleeping infant. While seeking the assistance of a more knowledgeable and experienced supervisor is an appropriate response the older child having behavior issues should have been removed to another classroom especially after engaging in aggressive physical behavior that had a high potential to cause injury to an infant.

Based on the information obtained this complaint is NOT SUBSTANTIATIATED for violation of Licensing Standard 109.10(16)a which requires the center and supervisor shall ensure that staff knows names and number of children assigned, and staff shall provide careful supervision. All parties provided consistent and credible information that there was a situation in which a child attempted to run away from staff. The staff member (JS) responsible for the child reported that she did observe the child running across and off the deck and immediately followed and retrieved the child. JS stated that the child did not leave the center property, did not get to the parking lot, and was caught on the grass in front of the building between the building and the public right of way. JS stated that there was no cat present or that the child was petting a cat.

Based on the information obtained this complaint is NOT SUBSTANTIATIATED for violation of Licensing Standard 109.12(2)b which among other things prohibits discipline involving the use of mechanical restrains unless part of a treatment plan for a child with a disability and for which staff shall receive training. All parties provided consistent and credible information that a mechanical restraint the form the child being placed in a crib was not used. All parties agree that an empty crib was moved to provide a barrier in front of an exit with the intention of preventing the child identified in the complaint from running from the classroom. All parties agree that the child did attempt to climb over the crib but was unsuccessful and again was neither placed in or able to climb into the crib.

Based on the information obtained this complaint is NOT SUBSTANTIATIATED for violation of Licensing Standard 109.8(2)a-i which among other things requires that ratio shall be maintained in the center as required by age. All parties provided consistent and credible information that ratio has been maintained in the individual classrooms as required by the ages of the children present in that room. The center does have separate programming spaces for the children based on age with an area for infants, 2-3 year olds, preschool, and school age children. All parties agree that the center will combine age groups at times as allowed by licensing standards including combining infants through school age children at the start and/or end of the day when there are no more than 4 infants and 2 older age children present. All parties agree that school age children were allowed to attend off site activities on different occasions with 10 children and 3 staff attending the activity. Licensing standards does require that when attending off site activities ratio plus one additional staff must be maintained. For groups consisting of a majority of school age children the child to staff ratio would 15:1.

**Special Notes and Action Required:**

This complaint was SUBSTANTIATED for violation of the Licensing Standard regarding maintaining an infant area free from intrusion by children over 2 years of age, but was NOT SUBSTANTIATED for the other identified concerns regarding supervision, ratio, and discipline. The following actions are REQUIRED and/or RECOMMENDED. A full license will remain in effect at this time.

REQUIRED:
None.

RECOMMENDED:
1. A service referral will be made to Child Care Resource and Referral to assist the center with training and developing proactive strategies to reduce the risk of children attempting to elope from the center and engage in other disruptive or negative behavior.

**Consultant's Signature:**

Ray Salsbury

**Date:**

08-06-2024