Iowa Department of Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER COMPLAINT

Name of Center: Kountry Kids Child Care **Enrollment:** 95 **License ID:** 50778

Street: 200 12th Street **City:** Harlan **IA** **Zip Code:** 51537 **County:** Shelby

Mailing Address: 200 12th Street

Mailing City: Harlan **IA** **Zip Code:** 51537

Director's Name: Pam Klinkefus **Center Phone Number:** 712-235-2411

On-Site Supervisors: **E-Mail Address:** kountrykids@fmctc.com

Date of Complaint: 09-18-2023 **Date of Visit:** 09-26-2023

[ ] 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

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:

An anonymous caller stated last week (week of 9-11-2023) three 3-yr olds wander away from the center through a hole in the fence. The Sheriff's Dept found the children on a road. Gone for about an hour. Today (9-18-2023) two 3-yr olds wandered off The Sheriff's Dept used a drone to located the children in a creek bed.

Licensing Rules Relevant to the Complaint:

109.11(3)a Center shall ensure that: Facility and premises are sanitary, safe, and hazard free. Adequate indoor and outdoor space is provided. The outdoor area shall include safe play equipment and area of shade. Sufficient space provided for dining. Sufficient lighting shall be provided. Sufficient ventilation. Sufficient heating. sufficient cooling. Sufficient bathroom and diapering facilities. Equipment, including kitchen appliances, are maintained so as not to result in burns, shock, or injury to children. Sanitation and safety procedures for the center are developed and implemented to reduce risk or injury or harm to children and reduce transmission of disease.

109.12(4) Sufficient toilet articles are provided for handwashing.Sufficient and safe indoor play equipment, materials, and furniture that conforms with CPSC or ASTM.Play equipment, materials, and furniture meet the developmental, activity, and special needs of the children.Room’s arrangement does not obstruct the direct observation of children.Individual covered mats, beds, or cots, and appropriate bedding is provided for all children who nap.Procedures are developed and implemented to maintain equipment and materials in a sanitary manner.Sufficient spacing is maintained between equipment to reduce transmission of disease and allow ease of movement by children and staff to respond to activities and care needs.Sanitary procedures are followed for use and storage of personal hygiene articles.

Inspection Findings:

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I talked to Pam Klinkefus, director of Kountry Kids Child Care on the telephone on 9-18-2023. She told me about the incident involving the two three year old children going under the bushes and down an embankment while the children were playing outside. Pam wasn't at the center on the center when the incident occurred. She said staff did a head count at 11:43 am and noticed the two children were missing. There were fourteen children outside with two staff. The staff didn't notify Mindy who was the person in charge that the children were missing until 12:00 pm. Mindy called 911 and went outside to look for the children. The Sheriffs Department came and searched for the children with drones and the children were found at 12:40 by a creek about a mile away. The children were taken by ambulance to the hospital as they had scratches and cockleburs and possible poison ivy. Pam reported the parents were notified, and she was having a meeting with the parents on 9-18-2023 at 6:00 pm. Pam said she is calling the board and demanding a fence be installed.
It was also reported that three children left the playground area unnoticed on 9-11-2023 and the Sheriff was called and the children were found down the road from the child care center. Staff weren't aware the children were missing. One staff was terminated as a result of this incident. Pam reported that supervision responsibilities were reviewed with staff following the first incident.

On 8-26-2023 Department of Health and Human Service worker Anissa McLead and myself met at Kountry Kids Child Care. We met with Pam and the staff who were with the children outside when they wandered away. Pam was extremely upset about the incidents and promised changes would occur. Staff were thankful that the children were found safe and unharmed.
Staff reported they were watching the children from different areas on the playground. At different times one staff went inside to check on the children's lunch and another staff went inside to use the restroom. Staff reported the children were noticed to be missing at 11:43 am. when a head count was done. (camera footage was reviewed and noticed the children missing at 11:42 am) A staff person in the center was notified that two children were missing and she came outside to help look for the children, Mindy, who was the person in charge was notified at 12:00 pm and she called the Sheriff shortly after 12:00 pm. The remaining children were taken back in the center at approximately 12:10 pm. Mindy said she asked the staff why they didn't notify her immediately when the the children were missing and their responses were - one staff said she didn't tell Mindy the children were missing because she was looking for the children and the other staff said she didn't know why she didn't tell her. Parents were notified.
A staff person stated some children like playing by the bushes, she said they have had children missing on more than the two incidents that were reported and that children have run to the front of the building, she said she wasn't properly trained on her job duties i.e. supervision, diaper changing procedure, and emergency procedures. It was reported that the staff may have been talking and not supervising the children.
The sheriffs department searched for the children with drones and they were found at a creek bed about a mile away, the children were missing for approximately one hour. The children were taken by ambulance to the hospital as they had scratches and cockleburs from tress/bushes and possible poison ivy.
The toddler playground area is fenced. On the day of my visit 9-26-2026 the center had an orange snow fence outlining the playground area to prevent children from getting out. Pam reported the board agreed to installing a fence and the installation will begin soon.

The center had playground safety/supervision training following the first incident on 9-11-2023 and again on 9-20-2023. The second training was held on the playground, staff were trained to space themselves out, staff shouldn't be visiting with each other as they need to supervise the children, watch by the shed area and to do head counts frequently and at transitions. Staff said it is hard to see the kids in some areas.

During my visit on 9-26-2023 it was determined that the center wasn't completing record checks correctly, and staff weren't receiving the required trainings. Pam reported that she was training Mindy to be the director and hoped that would be done by the end of 2023.

Special Notes and Action Required:

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Non-Compliance with Regulations Found

Proper supervision wasn't provided on 9-18-2023 to children playing outside on the playground. Proper supervision wasn't provided to children playing outside during the week of 9-11-2023. Both incidents resulted in children leaving the playground and the Sheriff being notified requiring a search for the children.
An emergency procedure for missing children was not clearly demonstrated, staff weren't aware of the proper procedure even after supervision training following the first incident.

A referral to Child Care Resource and Referral was made for training and consultation on a variety of issues i.e. supervision on the playground, emergency procedure for lost children, review of center rules/expectations with staff, staff training, record checks, diaper changing procedure etc.

Update - since the incident on the playground on 9-18-2023 the fence around the playground has been installed.

Facility Requirements
109.11(3)a Center shall ensure that: Facility and premises are sanitary, safe, and hazard free. Adequate indoor and outdoor space is provided. The outdoor area shall include safe play equipment and area of shade.

Play Equipment and Material
109.12(4) Room’s arrangement (playground) does not obstruct the direct observation of children.

Consultant's Signature:

Kathy DeGeorge-Evans

Date:

01-03-2024