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# CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER – HAWARDEN, IOWA

by Sue Miller and Lori Feller



The Child Development Center in Hawarden, Iowa opened in 1991, under the Shared Visions of Iowa program. A stipulation of the grant was that the center be accredited and thus, was accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The program at conception ran five days a week from 9 A.M. to 3 P.M. year round. Due to budget cuts over the years, we now are only in session Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 8 A.M. to 12 P.M. from September to May. Since 1997, our center was accredited every three years and from 2000, every five years. We are in

the process of renewing our accreditation at this time. Our program is supervised under Mid-Sioux Opportunity, Inc. Head Start. We serve 3 to 5 year old children.

We believe that accreditation gives much more to our program. It has guidelines for what children should be experiencing daily in a quality early childhood classroom. We intertwine these guidelines in with Head Start and Iowa Early Learning Standards, our HighScope® Curriculum, the GOLD® Assessment, and teamwork amongst our staff. This gives us a clear course to follow as to what to teach these children, what experiences to explore with them based on their interests, and to see that their needs are met socially, emotionally, physically, and cognitively. This is completed through language and literacy, physical, mathematical, science, social studies, and art activities. We are also more aware of adding in health, safety, nutrition, and dental health into our curriculum- teaching the children about tooth brushing, handwashing, and many ways to stay healthy and well.

Accreditation also helps us to see the strengths in our program and which areas need to be strengthened. We have a window to see where we need to develop a stronger curriculum with experiences for the children and in what areas. This gives staff awareness of where we need more training and development. We then can also plan for what kind of materials our classroom is lacking in to provide for the children to explore and learn with and what community resources we can pull into our classroom to extend and support their learning.

Our advice for those contemplating accreditation is this, go for it! It may seem like a lot of work to go through, especially the first time out, but it is well worth it. You are able to understand more of where your strengths are and develop your program to where you would like it to be. As you go on through the years and do the re-accreditation, it gets easier and you are still able to develop and refine your program. It is an accomplishment and honor to be a nationally accredited program.

