



GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF  
LIFELONG EDUCATION, ADVANCEMENT, AND POTENTIAL  
LANSING

Dr Beverly Walker Griffea  
ACTING DIRECTOR

7/15/2024

Benzie County Central Schools  
9300 Homestead Road,  
Benzonia, MI, 49616

License Number: DC100394398  
Special Investigation Number: SI-00123020

Dear Benzie County Central Schools,

I conducted a special investigation because the child care licensing division received a complaint against your facility that related to licensing rules or law. The allegations were related to the following:

Rule/Law Number	Rule Description
R 400.8125(1)	All staff and volunteers shall provide appropriate care and supervision of children at all times.

The details of the allegations are in the attached report. To investigate the allegations:

- I interviewed: Licensee designee Melinda Coger, LC1, CCSM1, Child A's Mother, Child B's Mother, Child C and Child D's Mother.
- I completed on-site inspections on the following dates: 5/20/2024

As a result of this investigation, I found the following violation(s):

Rule/Law Number	Rule Description
R 400.8125(1)	All staff and volunteers shall provide appropriate care and supervision of children at all times.
R 400.8330(5)	A center shall provide adequate staff so that food service activities do not detract

	from direct care and supervision of children.
R 400.8112(2)(e)	Within the department's child care background check system, accurately complete and maintain the connection, disconnection, or withdrawn status of each individual associated with the license.

Upon receipt of an acceptable corrective action plan, I recommend increased monitoring and the issuance of a 1st provisional license. If you accept the provisional license, you must sign and return the enclosed waiver form. If you do not accept the provisional license, you must notify this office in writing and an administrative hearing will be scheduled. Even if you don't accept the provisional license, you must still send us an acceptable corrective action plan.

As a result of this investigation, I found the following violation(s):

Rule/Law Number	Rule Description
R 400.8125(1)	All staff and volunteers shall provide appropriate care and supervision of children at all times.
R 400.8330(5)	A center shall provide adequate staff so that food service activities do not detract from direct care and supervision of children.
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Upon receipt of an acceptable corrective action plan, I recommend increased monitoring and the issuance of a 1st provisional license. If you accept the provisional license, you must sign and return the enclosed waiver form. If you do not accept the provisional license, you must notify this office in writing and an administrative hearing will be scheduled.

Due to the violations, you must send us a [corrective action plan](#) by 8/5/2024. You can use our corrective action plan form or create your own. Even if you don't accept the provisional license, you must still send us an acceptable corrective action plan.

If you need help writing the corrective action plan, please contact licensing consultant Amanda Wendell at (231) 492-5410 or [wendella@michigan.gov](mailto:wendella@michigan.gov). If you do not send a corrective action plan, you may face disciplinary action. The corrective action plan must include the following:

- o How compliance with each rule will be achieved.

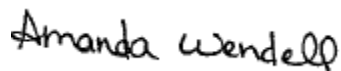
- Who is directly responsible for implementing the corrective action for each violation.
- Specific time frames for each violation as to when the correction will be completed or implemented.
- How continuing compliance will be maintained once compliance is achieved.
- The signature of the responsible party and a date.

<b>During this special investigation:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
A rule or law violation was found and a serious injury or death occurred.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
A rule or law violation was found and abuse and/or neglect of a child occurred.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

This report and any related corrective action plans must be filed in your licensing notebook. This report and any related corrective action plans will be online for parents to review under the [Statewide Search for Licensed Child Care Centers and Homes](#).

Please review this report for accuracy and contact your consultant, Amanda Wendell at (231) 492-5410 or wendella@michigan.gov. In the event that Amanda Wendell is not available and you need to speak to someone immediately, please contact the Child Care Licensing Bureau at 517-284-9730.

Sincerely,



Amanda Wendell, Licensing Consultant

Enclosure

**MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF  
LIFELONG EDUCATION, ADVANCEMENT, AND POTENTIAL  
CHILD CARE LICENSING**

**Report Type:** Special Investigation Report

**Date of Report:** 7/15/2024

<b>Special Investigation Number</b>	<b>Complaint/Incident Receipt Date</b>
SI-00123020	05/13/2024
<b>Investigation Initiation Date</b>	<b>Report Due Date</b>
5/16/2024	07/12/2024
<b>License Number</b>	<b>Licensee Name(s)</b>
DC100394398	Benzie County Central Schools
<b>Facility Name</b>	<b>Licensee Designee(s)</b>
Lake Ann Elementary School	Melinda C Coger
<b>Program Type</b>	<b>Capacity</b>
Center	62
<b>Facility Address</b>	<b>Mailing Address</b>
19375 Bronson Lake Rd, Interlochen, MI, 49643	9300 Homestead Road, Benzonia, MI, 49616
<b>Facility Phone Number</b>	<b>Facility Email Address</b>
2312757730	cogerm@benzieschools.net
<b>Original License Issuance Date</b>	<b>License Status:</b>
9/18/2018	Regular
<b>License Effective Date:</b>	<b>License Expiration Date:</b>
3/18/2023	3/17/2025

**ALLEGATION(S)**

	<b>Violation Established?</b>	
Child care staff did not provide appropriate care and supervision of Child A (female, 5 years) when she was left unsupervised on the playground after the class returned to the building.	Yes	
Additional Finding:	Yes	

**METHODOLOGY**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>
5/16/2024	Special Investigation Case Created SI-00123020
5/20/2024	Special Investigation Initiated via On-site 11:45 A.M. - 12:45 P.M. Interviewed licensee designee and CCSM1 Obtained documents and policies
5/30/2024	Contact – Phone Call Made

	Interviews with LC1, Child A's Mother, Child B's Mother, and Child C and D's Mother Left message for WITNESS1
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**ALLEGATION:** Child care staff did not provide appropriate care and supervision of Child A (female, 5 years) when she was left unsupervised on the playground after the class returned to the building.

**INVESTIGATION:** On 5/15/2024, I received a complaint alleging that, on 5/9/2024, Child A (female, 5 years) was left on the playground after Lead Caregiver 1 (LC1) brought the rest of the children inside. An employee from the local Intermediate School District, Witness 1 (WITNESS1), heard a banging sound on the outside door, and when she opened the door, she found Child A standing outside crying.

On 5/20/2024, I completed an onsite inspection. Licensee designee Melinda Coger reported that she was not present when the incident occurred but came to the center afterward and watched the video footage. According to what she saw on the video, LC1 opened the door from the playground to the hallway and let children in. She helped them remove their coats, then went into the classroom. A few minutes later, WITNESS1 walked past the door to the playground, heard something, and opened the door, bringing Child A inside and to her classroom. Approximately 3-7 minutes had passed between the time LC1 brought the children inside and WITNESS1 brought Child A in. Child A was “a little” upset when she was found. When asked about the incident, LC1 told Melinda Coger that Child A did not want to come inside and also told her that she did not know Child A was left outside. LC1 was terminated because of this incident. Melinda Coger denied any concerns with LC1 prior to this incident. She had worked at the center since January 2024, which is the same time Melinda Coger took over as licensee designee.

Child Care Staff Member 1 (CCSM1) reported that she has been an assistant in the room since August 2023. She reported that, on the day of the incident, the center was short-staffed. She and LC1 took the class out to the playground. At 11:50 A.M., she came back in to prep for lunch, leaving LC1 on the playground with 14-15 four-year-olds. CCSM1 went to the cafeteria and picked up a cart with the center’s meals. She served the other preschool classroom their lunch, then brought the cart to her classroom next door. At this time, LC1 was bringing the children inside. When CCSM1 entered the classroom, children were in there washing hands and getting ready for lunch. CCSM1 started setting up lunch, and WITNESS1 came in with Child A. According to CCSM1, staff are required to know their “magic number” and are supposed to count heads when they come in through a door. This was the responsibility of LC1. CCSM1 reported they would have noticed Child A was missing when they sat down for lunch, as they would have had an extra serving. When Child A was brought in the room, she was crying hard and was sad, saying she wanted to get flowers for her mother. Child A is a sweet girl, but she can get involved in an activity and lose track of what she is supposed to be doing. LC1 was outside alone with the children for approximately 10 minutes. Their procedure when outdoors is to give the children a five-minute warning,

then line up, with a line leader and a caboose. LC1 told CCSM1 that Child A was outside alone for approximately 2 minutes. CCSM1 has previously had concerns with LC1 and supervision. She noted that LC1 “screams” at children and has a negative personality. She denied there being any physical concerns. She spoke with Melinda Coger and the center’s program director the month prior about her concerns. According to CCSM1, LC1 was not concerned about the incident that occurred.

According to attendance records, there were 15 children present in that classroom on the day of the incident. In a follow-up interview, Melinda Coger was under the impression that a room could be out of the required ratio for a period of time while a staff member prepares a meal. She identified that, during the transition time, CCSM1 was present in the hallway, but was not supervising children. Melinda Coger reported that she became licensee designee of this center in January 2024 and is also the licensee designee of other centers. She denied knowing what the center’s policies are related to transitions. She assumes that staff are trained on policies at the beginning of every year. She has had conversations with staff about active supervision. The center does not have a policy requiring children to be counted. LC1 did not have much of a reaction to the incident or seem upset by it. She was terminated the same day. I discussed CCSM1’s concerns regarding LC1 with Melinda Coger. She confirmed that the class is a difficult and loud group and that LC1 is also loud. She denied having any specific concerns with LC1 regarding interactions with children, but she often came in tired and short-fused, wanting to go home, and has called in often. She does not take feedback well. The center has two preschool classrooms, each with two child care staff members, and an infant/toddler classroom with three child care staff members. There is also normally a floating child care staff member, but that person had called in sick the day of the incident. The floater is who would normally handle food service. On the day of the incident, CCSM1 contacted Child A’s parents, who initially said they were not surprised but more recently said that Child A had talked about the incident again. Melinda Coger reported that, in response to this incident, she is working on hiring more staff for the center. She has made counting heads an expectation during transitions, when taking a child to the bathroom, before transitioning to the outside, and when they get outside. Melinda Coger provided me access to watch the video, but there was no means to send it to me. At 11:53 A.M., CCSM1 entered the building from the playground and went to a different part of the building. At 12:00 P.M., CCSM1 returned to the hallway with a lunch cart. At 12:04 P.M., LC1 started bringing children in from the playground. At 12:10 P.M., WITNESS1 was walking past the door, paused, went back and opened the door, and ushered Child A inside and to her classroom.

I observed the playground to be a large, fenced in area. It is roughly L-shaped, with one part extending around the side of the building. If an individual was standing near the doors, they would be unable to view that part of the playground.

Child A’s Mother reported that, at pickup on the day of the incident, Child A told her, “Mom, I got left outside today.” She did not provide any additional information. Shortly after getting home, Child A’s Mother received a phone call from the program director, saying she was just notified of the incident. The program director denied having access

to the camera footage, saying she would need to talk to the principal. Child A told her mother that she “went on recess with Miss (LC1), and Miss (CCSM1) had an issue with another kid. I never heard her tell us to line up.” Child A’s Mother then clarified that the incident with the other child was that they did not want to go outside. While outside, LC1 was the only adult, according to Child A. Child A told her mother that when she saw she was alone, she went to the door to find it locked, and banged on the door. Child A’s Mother reported that she called the program director to ask why she was not notified immediately or at pick-up and received “no real answer.” Child A’s Mother identified that she knows of other parents whose children have had incidences at school of which the parent was not notified. Child A is doing well and is not experiencing any trauma. The center has an app for communication with parents, so she does not understand why she was not notified after the incident or at pick-up. Note: According to the incident report, Child A’s Mother was notified at 4:45 P.M.

In an interview with LC1, she reported that CCSM1 left, leaving her alone with 15 children on the playground. As she was bringing the children in from the playground, she saw CCSM1 enter the classroom with the lunch cart, so she sent children in to her. When LC1 entered the classroom, CCSM1 was not there, so LC1 started their pre-lunch yoga video and, a couple of minutes later, WITNESS1 came into the room with Child A. She speculated that CCSM1 must have gone from their classroom to the other preschool classroom through the adjoining bathroom. While on the playground, LC1 had the children line up. Two children were arguing, so she went to handle that situation. She thinks this is why she did not notice Child A was not with the group. When she came back in the classroom, Child A was upset and wanted a hug, saying, “I wanted to pick flowers for my mom.” She was comforted and settled down within 15 seconds. LC1 reported that she is supposed to count children when bringing them inside but did not because she was alone. She reported that Melinda Coger told her she has to “stay on schedule” so she was hurrying. While outside, she knew she was out of ratio but there were no extra staff members. Melinda Coger knew they were out of ratio and said, “there are certain situations where we are allowed to be out of ratio,” such as lunch, bathroom breaks, and morning drop off.

I left a message for WITNESS1, requesting a return call. As of the date of this report, she has not returned my call. Child B’s Mother reported that Child B has been attending the child care this academic school year. Things are going “pretty good” and he “loves Miss (CCSM1).” Child B’s Mother has had issues in the past related to communication with LC1, stating she did not communicate well with parents and yells a lot. She denied that LC1 is still employed at the center.

Child B’s Mother has witnessed children hitting each other and LC1 not noticing, stating there is a “lack of knowing what kids were doing.” Sometimes, LC1 would leave the classroom, leaving CCSM1 out of ratio, and other staff members would not know where she was.

Child C and Child D’s Mother reported that Child C and Child D have been in care for the academic school year. Things are going “pretty good”, and she denied any concerns

regarding supervision. She reported that the center is short-staffed “quite a bit,” and they have had to cancel services because of staffing issues. There are normally two child care staff members in the preschool classroom. There is a lot of turnover in staff.

**RULE/STATUTORY VIOLATIONS:**

APPLICABLE RULES	
R 400.8125(1)	All staff and volunteers shall provide appropriate care and supervision of children at all times.
ANALYSIS:	LC1 did not provide appropriate care and supervision of Child A when she failed to notice Child A was left on the playground.
CONCLUSION:	<b>Violation Established</b>

**ADDITIONAL FINDING:**

**INVESTIGATION:** CCSM1 reported that, on the day of the incident, the center was short-staffed. She and LC1 took the class out to the playground. At 11:50 A.M., she came back in to prep for lunch, leaving LC1 on the playground with 14-15 four-year-olds for approximately 10 minutes. According to attendance records, there were 15 children present in that classroom on the day of the incident. While CCSM1 was getting and serving lunch, CCSM1 was caring for 15 children alone and left one child on the playground.

**RULE/STATUTORY VIOLATIONS:**

APPLICABLE RULES	
R 400.8330(5)	A center shall provide adequate staff so that food service activities do not detract from direct care and supervision of children.
ANALYSIS:	The center did not provide adequate staff so that food service activities did not detract from the direct care and supervision of children. While a child care staff member was getting and serving lunch, another child care staff member left a child unsupervised on the playground.
CONCLUSION:	<b>Violation Established</b>

**INVESTIGATION:** Melinda Coger did not ensure that the center's CCBC account is accurate. LC1 worked at the center from January 2024 until the day of the incident and was never connected to the center's CCBC account. LC1 is no longer employed by the licensee group but is still connected to a site within the group where she worked prior to January 2024.

**RULE/STATUTORY VIOLATIONS:**

APPLICABLE RULES	
R 400.8112(2)(e)	Within the department's child care background check system, accurately complete and maintain the connection,

	disconnection, or withdrawn status of each individual associated with the license.
ANALYSIS:	Licensee designee Melinda Coger did not ensure the center's CCBC account was maintained and accurate. Lead Caregiver 1 was not connected to the facility in the child care background check system.
CONCLUSION:	<b>Repeat Violation Established</b> <b>Reference:</b> 6/2/2022 :Violation Established;

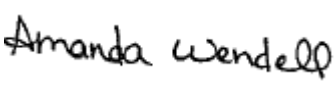

**INVESTIGATION:** The appropriate child care staff member to child ratios must be maintained at all times.

**RULE/STATUTORY VIOLATIONS:**

APPLICABLE RULES	
R 400.8182(3)(d)	Preschoolers, 4 years of age until school-age, child care staff member to child ratio of 1 to 12, maximum group size not applicable.
ANALYSIS:	The appropriate child care staff member to child ratios must be maintained at all times.
CONCLUSION:	<b>Technical Assistance</b> 6/27/2024

**BUREAU RECOMMENDATION**

Bureau Recommendation
Upon receipt of an acceptable corrective action plan, I recommend increased monitoring and the issuance of a 1st provisional license.

Approved By:			
			
Amanda Wendell	07/15/2024	Candice Case-French	07/15/2024
<b>Consultant</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Area Manager</b>	<b>Date</b>