



GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF LICENSING AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS  
LANSING

Marlon I. Brown, DPA  
ACTING DIRECTOR

11/24/2023

Community Action Agency of South-Central MI  
175 Main Street,  
Battle Creek, MI, 49014

License Number: DC130088768  
Special Investigation Number: SI-00023355

Dear Community Action Agency of South-Central MI,

I conducted a special investigation because the child care licensing bureau 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 400.8140(1)	Positive methods of discipline that encourage self-control, self-direction, self-esteem, and cooperation must be used.

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

- I interviewed: child care staff, licensee designee, program director, and parents.
- I completed on-site inspections on the following dates: 10/12/2023

During this special investigation:	Yes	No
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, Roxanne Duckworth at 269-568-2686 or duckworthr@michigan.gov. In the event that Roxanne Duckworth is not available, and you need to speak to someone immediately, please contact the Child Care Licensing Bureau at 517-284-9730.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roxanne Duckworth". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R'.

Roxanne Duckworth, Licensing Consultant

Enclosure

**MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF LICENSING AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS  
CHILD CARE LICENSING BUREAU**

**Report Type:** Special Investigation Report

**Date of Report:** 11/24/2023

<b>Special Investigation Number</b>	<b>Complaint/Incident Receipt Date</b>
SI-00023355	9/21/2023
<b>Investigation Initiation Date</b>	<b>Report Due Date</b>
9/22/2023	1/1/2024
<b>License Number</b>	<b>Licensee Name(s)</b>
DC130088768	Community Action Agency of South-Central MI
<b>Facility Name</b>	<b>Licensee Designee(s)</b>
Doris Hale Child Development Center	Joyce Ida Cooper
<b>Program Type</b>	<b>Central Administrator(s)</b>
Center	
<b>Capacity</b>	<b>Program Director(s) Name</b>
225	Amy Marie Ayres <b>Qualifications:</b> R 400.8113(7)(b) (9). <b>Date PD Approved:</b> 2021-01-22
<b>Facility Address</b>	<b>Mailing Address</b>
110 Green Street, Battle Creek, MI, 49017	175 Main Street, Battle Creek, MI, 49014
<b>Facility Phone Number</b>	<b>Facility Email Address</b>
2699657769	joycec@caascm.org
<b>Original License Issuance Date</b>	<b>License Status:</b>
10/1/1999	Regular
<b>License Effective Date:</b>	<b>License Expiration Date:</b>
12/11/2021	12/10/2023

**ALLEGATION(S)**

	<b>Violation Established?</b>	
Appropriate care was not provided to two unknown children at the child care center while outside on the playground on 9/21/2023.		No

**METHODOLOGY**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>
9/22/2023	Special Investigation Case Created SI-00023355
//	Roxanne Duckworth, Special investigation must be completed within 45 business days of

9/22/2023	Contact – Email Received Received email with video footage for playground.
9/22/2023	Special Investigation Initiated via Phone Call Spoke with the Community Action Agency Headstart director of operations/licensee designee, Joyce Cooper.
10/4/2023	Contact – Phone Call Made Interviewed child care staff, including Child Care Staff Member (CCSM) 1, CCSM 2, CCSM 3, CCSM 4, and CCSM 5, and program director, Amy Ayres.
10/12/2023	Inspection Completed On-Site Arrival_ 12:03PM. Observed all classrooms. Spoke with licensee designee, Joyce Cooper.
11/20/2023	Contact – Phone Call Made Spoke with Child A, Child B, Child C, and Child D's Mothers.
11/20/2023	Exit Conference Spoke with Community Action Headstart director of operations/licensee designee, Joyce Cooper.
11/20/2023	Contact – Phone Call Made Contacted Battle Creek ISD. Left a voice mail.

**ALLEGATION: Appropriate care was not provided to two unknown children at the child care center while outside on the playground on 9/21/2023.**

**INVESTIGATION:**

On 09/21/2023 I received a complaint that an unknown female child (preschool age) and an unknown male child (preschool age) were outside on the playground with their classroom of other children and child care staff. The female child was picked up and grabbed by the arm and dragged across the grass by a female child care staff member. The child's legs were dangling, and she was screaming. Another child care staff wanted the male child to get off the slide, but the child wanted to go down the slide one more time. The child care staff member yanked the child down from the slide structure (approximately 4 feet tall). Child care staff were also carrying children under their arms "like a cat." This all occurred this same day at approximately 10:30/11AM.

On 09/22/2023 I spoke with the director of operations for Community Action Agency Headstart/licensee designee, Joyce Cooper. Joyce Cooper indicated she was already aware of this complaint as there is a resident in the neighborhood that sometimes contacts Doris Hale and Community Action Agency to complain about various things regarding the center, including the playground, parking, etc., and had contacted the main office yesterday to complain about the child care staff on the playground. Joyce Cooper reported that there are cameras on the playground, and she will have their tech person pull the video footage and email it to me.

On 10/04/2023 I interviewed child care staff per telephone. I spoke with Child Care Staff Member (CCSM) 1, Child Care Staff Member (CCSM) 2, Child Care Staff Member (CCSM)3, Child Care Staff Member (CCSM) 4, Child Care Staff Member (CCSM) 5, and program director, Amy Ayres.

CCSM 1 works in the child care classroom Hale B and has worked with the agency for years. She denied that herself or any other child care staff in the classroom yanked children's arms or handled them in an unsafe manner on the playground or at any other time. CCSM 1 did indicate that the group of children in the classroom are very active and high energy and some have some special needs, so she and the other staff do often have to safely move children by picking them up under the arms when they are on the playground because they often do not cooperate with lining up on the rope to go inside as they want to continue to play outside. CCSM 1 recalled the child on the slide not wanting to get down to go inside and said she was the one who removed him from the slide. She reported that she used the safe handling protocols that the center has in place by telling him she was going to lift him down and then lifting him by putting her hands under his armpits. She did carry him over to the rope where other children were lined up.

CCSM 2 works in the child care classroom Hale B and has worked with the center for a few years. She denied the allegations of this complaint and said she and the other child care staff would never be rough with the children and always follow the center discipline/behavior management and safe handling protocols/policies. CCSM 2 reported that the center is trained on Conscious Discipline practices for discipline, such as, ignoring behaviors, distracting/redirecting, relaxing/breathing techniques, etc. They also have safe handling protocols for handling children when there is a need to physically move a child, which is telling a child when you are going to touch them and lifting them under their arms to pick them up or carry them. They are prohibited from grabbing children by their arms or wrists, but sometimes it may appear to others as if they did grab a child's arm because sometimes when they are holding a child's hand, the child will drop themselves to the ground and "dead weight." Staff will then lower themselves, so that the child's arm is safe, and they land safely.

CCSM 3 works in the Hale B classroom. She denied that herself or any child care staff were being rough with the children and yanking them by their arms. CCSM 3 reported that their classroom has a lot of very active children that enjoy being chased around on the playground and most of the children never want to go inside. She indicated that it is challenging to get all the children to line up on the ring rope to go inside from the playground, and that she and other staff do sometimes have to carry children inside. CCSM 3 recalled staff trying to get a child down from the slide and said that CCSM 1 was trying to get one of the children down from the slide to go inside and he was being aggressive (kicking and hitting) and "throwing a fit," which is a common behavior for this child in particular. CCSM 1 lifted him under his arms off the slide and carried him. CCSM 3 indicated she was probably the person someone was referring to with grabbing a child's arm, but that she actually had not grabbed the child's arm. CCSM 3 was walking with the child toward the ring rope at the fence, holding hands, when the child

“dead weighted” herself to the ground because she did not want to go inside. CCSM 3 lowered her own body to protect the child from hurting her arm in the fall. CCSM 3 was able to tell me the safe handling protocols and discipline techniques/policy the center uses with children.

CCSM 4 works in the Hale F classroom. She does not recall any kind of incident like this happening at the center and has never heard anything about it. CCSM 4 had no concerns with any child care staff and indicated she has never seen or heard of any child care staff rough handling children. CCSM 4 was able to tell me what the safe handling protocol for the center is and what discipline/behavior management techniques are used with the children in the classroom/playgrounds.

CCSM 5 works in the Hale E classroom. She did not have concerns with any child care staff and has never heard of any child care staff treating children in a rough manner. She was aware and able to tell me the discipline and safe handling techniques/protocol used at the center and indicated they receive training on this when they start employment and regularly at staff meetings.

The program director, Amy Ayres, reported no issues or concerns with any child care staff. She denied the allegations of this complaint and indicated she has never observed child care staff discipline inappropriately or treat children in a rough manner or else they would not be here still. Amy Ayres reported that on the day of the alleged incidents, Hale B was the only classroom outside on that playground. She also reported that center child care staff are trained at orientation and regularly at staff meetings on discipline techniques and safe handling of children.

On this same day I reviewed the video footage for the center playground dated 09/21/2023. Hale B classroom of children, three child care staff members, and one staff from the school district were present on the playground. The children were very active on the playground running around, playing on the play structure, and other equipment. The staff were walking around the playground as the children played. One of the child care staff members were walking around with the ring rope trying to round the children up to go inside. I did observe a staff member holding a female child’s hand and the child dropping herself to the ground and the staff member lowering her body and letting go of the child’s hand. I also observed a child care staff member lift a male child off the slide under his arms, and he did seem to be kicking and screaming as she lifted him off. I did see staff lift children under their arms and carry them towards the rope and fence. I did not observe any inappropriate discipline or unsafe handling of the children.

On 10/12/2023 I conducted an unannounced onsite inspection to Doris Hale Child Development Center. I observed children in their classrooms napping, doing circle time, eating lunch, and just arriving in the part day room. There was an adequate number of staff to children ratio in each room. I obtained a copy of the parent handbook with the center discipline policies and the safe handling protocol.

I reviewed the discipline/behavior management policy for the center in the family handbook. The center uses Conscious Discipline to manage behaviors that arise in the classroom. Per the family handbook, "Conscious Discipline is a longtime leader in the integration of classroom management with social- emotional learning, utilizing everyday events as the curriculum and addressing the adult's emotional intelligence as well as the child's. Conscious Discipline empowers adults to respond consciously to daily conflict, transforming it into an opportunity to teach critical life skills to children. Guidance is part of the learning experience for all children. Our staff are trained to observe children, to design an environment that minimizes conflict, to use clear language and directions, and to anticipate challenging situations. However, occasional issues requiring intervention may arise. In these cases, staff and families use strategies that are positive and appropriate for each child's age and developmental stage. Techniques include ignoring behaviors that are not causing safety issues, distracting/redirecting children's inappropriate behaviors, giving choices, setting limits, problem solving, role modeling appropriate behaviors, using encouraging language, giving visual cues, social stories, and encouraging use of feeling words. Children are offered the use of the Safe Place, a cozy learning center, to practice managing feelings and calming themselves. For infants and young toddlers, a caregiver's chest or lap is the Safe Place."


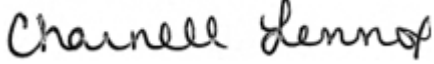
On 11/20/2023 I spoke with Child A, Child B, Child C, and Child D's Mothers. None of the parents reported concerns with the child care staff or the center. They had no concerns with the discipline at the center. Child A's Mother reported that the staff in Hale B are very patient and attentive with the children from what she has observed when she has been at the center. Child C's Mother reported that her child has some very difficult behaviors, and they are the first center where she has felt like they handle Child C appropriately and work with his schedule, plan, and needs. She also reported they are very great at communicating back and forth and working with her on Child C's behaviors.

On 11/20/2023 I had an exit conference with the director of operations for Community Action Agency Headstart/licensee designee, Joyce Cooper. Joyce Cooper reported that since this complaint there have been some changes. There were staff changes in Hale B, and the child care staff are very interactive with the children, which has been helpful for this group of children. They also split the class in half for several weeks, so half of the children (8) would attend one day, and the other half of children (8) would attend the other day, and then they brought back all 16 children together as a whole group. This helped the children to learn the rules and schedule and get a routine down with fewer "friends" as a distraction. She reported that this really helped the children with their behaviors, and they are doing much better. The center has also had someone from the Battle Creek Police Department speak with the neighbors to the center and sit in the parking lot randomly to be more present in the area.

**RULE/STATUTORY VIOLATIONS:**

APPLICABLE RULES
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R 400.8140(1)	Positive methods of discipline that encourage self-control, self-direction, self-esteem, and cooperation must be used.
ANALYSIS:	Child care staff were interviewed and denied grabbing any children by the arm and dragging them across the grass or pulling them from the slide playground structure. Video footage of the playground was reviewed for the day the incident allegedly occurred and no unsafe or inappropriate handling of the children was observed. Parents were interviewed and reported no concerns with the center and child care staff in their child's classroom.
CONCLUSION:	VIOLATION NOT ESTABLISHED

<b>Approved By:</b>			
	11/24/2023		11/27/2023
Roxanne Duckworth <b>Consultant</b>	<b>Date</b>	Charnell Lennox <b>Area Manager</b>	<b>Date</b>