



MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
OFFICE OF CHILDHOOD - CHILD CARE COMPLIANCE
COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION OF
SUBSTANTIATED STATUTE OR RULE VIOLATIONS

DATE OF REPORT
3/12/2021

DVN
000180503

FACILITY NAME

MONTESSORI LEARNING CENTER

FACILITY ADDRESS

1045 UNION RD

CITY

ST LOUIS

ZIP CODE

63123-6648

PHONE NUMBER

(314) 487-5448

COUNTY

ST LOUIS

ASSIGNED SPECIALIST

WILMESHER, LAURA

RULE/STATUTE VIOLATION(S)

VIOLATION(S)

19 CSR 30-62.182 (1)(A)(1)

Caregivers shall not leave any child without competent adult supervision.

19 CSR 30-62.182 (1)(A)(3)

Caregivers shall provide frequent, direct contact so children are not left unobserved on the premises.

CONCLUSION SUMMARY

Child Care Facility Specialist (CCFS) Laura Wilmesher conducted an investigation regarding the allegation that director, Betty Smith, regularly leaves her preschool class unattended. After conducting the investigation, CCFS Wilmesher finds this allegation is substantiated. This conclusion is based on the following evidence of licensing rule violations which occurred at the facility:

19 CSR 30-62.182 (1)(A)(1) which states: "Caregivers shall not leave any child without competent adult supervision."

AND

19 CSR 30-62.182 (1)(A)(3) which states: "Caregivers shall provide frequent, direct contact so children are not left unobserved on the premises."

On March 17, 2021, CCFS Wilmesher conducted interviews with Child A and Child C. Child A stated sometimes Ms. Betty leaves the children alone for a few minutes. Child C stated Ms. Betty sometimes leaves the children by themselves in the classroom, and they have to take care of themselves. Child C stated Ms. Betty tells the children, "Don't get into any trouble," when she leaves the room. Child C stated another teacher doesn't come in the room when Ms. Betty leaves, and that Ms. Betty leaves the room for just a little bit.

On March 17, 2021, CCFS Wilmesher also conducted an interview with caregiver Madelynn Turner who stated Ms. Betty prepares lunch for the facility, and usually no one is in the classroom with the children when she cooks lunch. Madelynn Turner stated Ms. Christine [owner, Christine Strzembosz] sometimes goes in Ms. Betty's classroom, but usually the kids are sitting on the carpet alone, and that she's walked past the classroom and witnessed the children unattended first hand.

On March 24, 2021, CCFS Wilmesher conducted interviews with caregiver Kay Finder as well as a follow-up interview with Ms. Madelynn. Ms. Kay stated Ms. Christine and Ms. Betty send the kids down the hallway by themselves. Ms. Madelynn stated if Ms. Christine is in one classroom and Ms. Betty is in another, they will send children down the hallway by themselves.

On March 24, 2021, CCFS Wilmesher and CCS Angela Clark conducted an unannounced follow-up visit to the facility. During the visit, CCFS Wilmesher and CCS Clark observed director Betty Smith in a classroom near the entrance of the facility with thirteen children, ages three to six years old. CCFS Wilmesher and CCS Clark then observed the thirteen children walk down the hallway to another classroom, walking from classroom near the entrance of the building to the two year old classroom down the hallway, unattended, as Ms. Betty was still in the classroom as the children walked down the hallway. One child entered a preschool classroom alone to use the bathroom. After CCFS Wilmesher informed Ms. Betty that the child had entered the preschool classroom unattended, and Ms. Betty went into the classroom to get the child. Meanwhile three children entered the two year old classroom with owner, Christine Strzembosz, while the remaining nine children entered another preschool classroom, all unattended.

Shortly after this interaction, and after it was discussed with both Ms. Betty and Ms. Christine that children cannot walk down the hallway or enter into classrooms unattended, CCFS Wilmesher and CCS Clark observed a two year old walk down the hallway to the toddler room, unattended, from the two year old classroom with Ms. Christine, where he was given a blanket by a toddler teacher, Kay Finder, and then sent back down the hallway to the two year old classroom by himself. Again, CCFS Wilmesher and CCS Clark discussed with Ms. Christine that children cannot walk down the hallway unattended.

On March 29, 2021, CCFS Wilmesher received an email from Ms. Kay, who stated that on Friday, March 26, 2021, Ms. Christine left two year olds unattended in the classroom while bringing a child to the toddler room down the hallway. According to Ms. Kay, the children were unsupervised for about 5-10 minutes.

On April 9, 2021, CCFS Wilmesher conducted a follow-up interview with Ms. Christine who stated on Friday, March 26, 2021, she was calling the toddler room and they didn't answer, so she walked a child to the toddler room. Ms. Christine stated no one was supervising the children in the two year old room when she did this, and that the children were unsupervised for approximately a minute and a half.

On May 10, 2021, CCFS Wilmesher conducted an interview with reporter, Allyson Turner, who stated the facility didn't have a cook, and Ms. Betty would leave the children by themselves in the preschool room to go across the hallway to the kitchen and cook lunch. Ms. Allyson stated sometimes Ms. Betty would send children down the hallway to take something to another teacher, and that the child was unattended in the hallway when she did this.

On May 11, 2021, CCFS Wilmesher conducted an interview with Parent D who stated he witnessed Ms. Christine in the toddler room on Friday, March 26, 2021, around 10:30 AM, and that he was in the room for probably less than two minutes.

CORRECTIVE MEASURES

CORRECTIVE MEASURE	COMPLETED (Y/N)	COMPLETED DATE
All caregivers and volunteers must obtain one (1) clock hour of approved training on professionalism in a child care setting. Training may be obtained from the Missouri Workshop Calendar. The training calendar can be found at http://www.moworkshopcalendar.org/ . The local Child Care Aware agency may also assist in finding training. The Child Care Aware website can be found at http://www.childcareaware.org/ . Verification of training completion shall be uploaded to the Open Initiative Toolbox.	Yes	7/24/2021

CORRECTIVE MEASURE	COMPLETED (Y/N)	COMPLETED DATE
All staff and volunteers must obtain one (2) clock hours on supervision. The training must be held by an approved and qualified source, outside of the Montessori Learning Center network. Training may be obtained from the Missouri Workshop Calendar. The training calendar can be found at http://www.moworkshopcalendar.org/ . Verification of training completion shall be from the Open Initiative Toolbox report.	Yes	6/22/2021

CORRECTIVE MEASURE	COMPLETED (Y/N)	COMPLETED DATE
The facility shall conduct a staff meeting to review the center's policies and all licensing rules and regulations regarding supervision. The facility must provide the Section for Child Care Regulation with a statement, signed by all staff members (paid employees and paid/unpaid volunteers), to indicate they understand and agree to follow those rules and regulations.	Yes	3/30/2023

DISPOSITION	DISPOSITION DATE
SUBSTANTIATED	5/11/2021

APPROVING SUPERVISOR
CLARK, ANGELA