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**Children First for Oregon Releases 2007 County Data Book on the Status of Oregon's Children**

*Oregon's independent child advocacy group finds that family-friendly policies are as good for businesses as they are for children.*

**Portland, OR – March 4, 2008** – The health and well-being of Oregon's children is closely aligned with the economic health of Oregon businesses, according to Children First for Oregon's annual *County Data Book 2007* released today. Children First's report shows that when family-friendly statewide policies are adopted businesses benefit.

"More and more research shows that family friendly policies don't just strengthen the well-being of children – they are good for businesses and the economy," said Robin Christian, Children First for Oregon's Executive Director.

The report points to three child and family policy areas that have proven to be beneficial for businesses: health care coverage, affordable, quality child care, and paid family leave.

Investing in children's health yields many benefits, including improved development, improved school performance, and long-term savings in health care costs, all of which is good for kids and good for business. Unfortunately, the skyrocketing cost of providing health coverage has forced many employers to drop or drastically cut coverage for employees and their families steadily since 2000. Currently, nearly 110,000 children in Oregon are without health insurance.

Affordable, quality child care is another area where family and economic interests align. When employees have access to quality child care, they are more productive, miss less work and experience higher morale. Conversely, lack of quality care for their children can result in lost productivity, higher turnover and reduced profits. Although child care providers are among the state's lowest-paid workers, parents around the state still struggle to afford the cost of care.

Paid Family Leave, recently adopted in California and Washington State, allows family members to stay home to care for a newborn or newly adopted child. Paid leave improves the health and education of children, and helps ensure successful cognitive and social development. Businesses benefit from decreased turnover and training costs, increased commitment from employees, and decreased employee absenteeism.

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“Regence understands that family-friendly policies benefit kids as well as the bottom line,” said Angela Hult of Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Oregon, the presenting sponsor of the report. “We’re thrilled that Children First for Oregon is calling on businesses and elected leaders to recognize the positive economic impact of helping kids and families.”

“Public investment has proven a powerful tool to improve the well-being of children and drive Oregon’s economy,” said Christian. “The time has come to forge a new alliance between the public and private sectors in order to do what’s good for kids and good for business.”

## Data Highlights

This year’s Data Book also continues Children First’s commitment to providing the most current data on the well-being of Oregon’s children and their families:

### Child Health

- 109,907 children (12.6%) have no health insurance, while just over 220,000 receive coverage through the Oregon Health Plan.
- 1,945 girls ages 15-17 were pregnant, a 15% increase since the previous year.
- 64% of children ages 6-10 have experienced tooth decay and, of those, 36% have untreated decay.
- An estimated 35% of children ages 6-10 have not seen a dentist in the previous year.

### Child Welfare

- 12,043 children (13.8 per 1,000) are abuse/neglect victims, which is 6% worse than last year.
- 6.7% of abuse/neglect victims are re-abused within six months, which is 34% better than last year.
- 49% of victims of abuse/neglect are under age 6.
- 16,142 children in Oregon have been in foster care at least once during the past year.

### Family Finances and Stability

- \$55,700 is the median family income, which is 5% lower than last year and 6% lower than the current national median.
- 146,543 children (16.8%) live in extreme poverty (less than \$20,000 for a family four), which is 9% better than the previous year.
- 102,682 (5.4%) of the population are unemployed and seeking work.

*Children First works to make Oregon a place where all children thrive. **We educate and engage Oregonians to promote programs and policies that **get results for kids.**** KIDS COUNT is a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a private charitable organization that funds a nationwide network of projects that support disadvantaged children and families. [www.cffo.org](http://www.cffo.org).*

**Presenting Sponsor:** Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Oregon provides medical, dental and related coverage for about one million members in Oregon and in Clark County, Washington. It’s part of Regence, the largest not-for-profit health insurer in the northwest and intermountain states, collectively covering nearly three million people.