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Children First for Oregon Releases 2008 County Data Book on the Status of Oregon's Children

Oregon's independent child advocacy group finds that more families are struggling to make ends meet; calls on Legislature to pass and protect the programs children need.

Portland, OR – January 27, 2009 – The current recession has driven up Oregon's unemployment rate and pushed many families into poverty, according to Children First for Oregon's annual County Data Book 2008 released today. Children First's report shows that more children are living in financially unstable homes, many of them without access to basic necessities like health care.

"Oregon families need real help and they need it now," said Robin Christian, Children First for Oregon's Executive Director. "We cannot allow the current economic crisis to compound the issues our children are facing."

Statewide, over 140,000 children live below the federal poverty line (\$20,650 for a family of four in 2007); 110,000 children are without health coverage; well over 200,000 families receive food stamps, an 11% increase over the previous year and 34,512 families receive assistance through Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program, an 8% increase over last year.

The organization calls on elected leaders to pass two programs critical to families: expanded health coverage for children and employee-funded paid family leave. In a session with deep budget cuts planned, Children First also calls for the protection of critical human services, like Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and Employment Related Day Care (ERDC).

"The Legislature must do something to help struggling families right now and at the top of their list should be making sure every child has health coverage," said Cathy Kaufmann, Policy & Communications Director for Children First. "Not only will this help families and protect the health of our kids – it will also draw down millions of dollars in federal matching money at a time when the state economy sorely needs it.

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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:

Family Finances and Stability

- \$58,700 is the median family income, which is 5% lower than the national median.
- 336,019 children live in low-income households (200% of the federal poverty level, or \$41,300 for a family of four in 2007).
- Unemployment claims have increased 58% between November 2007 and November 2008.
- Subprime loans make up 25.4% of loans in Oregon.
- 34,512 families receive cash assistance through the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program.
- 19,870 families receive child care subsidies through the Employment Related Day Care (ERDC) program.

Child Health

- 110,571 children (12.6%) have no health insurance.
- There are 3,048 students for every 1.0 FTE school nurse in Oregon. The preferred ratio is 750 students to 1.0 FTE nurse.
- 78.4% of mothers received adequate prenatal care.

Child Welfare

- 10,716 children were victims of child abuse/neglect (12.2 per 1,000 children).
- 15,060 children in the county have been in foster care at least once during the past year.
- 63,504 reports of child abuse/neglect were made in 2007. 42% of these reports were assessed, and 12% were founded.

*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.*

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