

Oregon receives grade of C- in way it handles children

■ Report shows some improvements but other areas show decline

^{50,30} We're not failing, but we're not making the honor roll either.

For the second consecutive year, the Status of Children in Oregon Report Card says the state earned the overall grade of C-minus in the areas of investment in families, early childhood, safety, teen years and education.

The report card evaluates 19 indicators of child well-being.

Sponsored by Children First for Oregon, a statewide advocacy and education organization, the report shows improvement in the areas of education, teen pregnancy and uninsured children, but child abuse and neglect, juvenile crime and high school drop-out rates have become worse.

Improvements include:

- Children have greater access to health insurance; 8 percent of children under the age of 18 lack health insurance.

- More mothers are receiving prenatal care; 81 percent of babies are born to mothers who received care early in their pregnancy.

Report Card		'96-'97	'97-'98
Investment in families	C	C+	
Early childhood	B	B	
Safety	B	C-	
Teen years	F	F	
Education	C	B	
	C-	C-	

Source: Children First for Oregon

Staff graphic

- Oregon's infant mortality rate is one of the lowest in the country; 5.6 of every 1,000 babies born died before their first birthday.

- Teen pregnancy declined for the second year in a row; 17.9 of every 1,000 girls age 10-17 years old got pregnant.

Other indicators showed things to be worsening for Oregon's children.

- Last year, 11.8 of every 1,000 children in Oregon were confirmed to have been abused or neglected.

- Substance abuse among teenagers has significantly grown in all categories since 1990; 30 percent of eighth-graders reported drinking alcohol in the last month.

- Immunization rates for 2-year-olds are well below the national average; 27 percent of 2-year-old children were not up to date on their basic immunizations.

- Oregon's juvenile arrest rate has increased by one-third since 1990; there were 62 juvenile arrests per 1,000 youth in the state.