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## Children First for Oregon Report details plight of children statewide

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Today, one of four children in Oregon is at risk. What does that mean for our future and why should Oregonians care?

Simply put, even if you don't agree that normally we have an obligation to reach out to those less fortunate, our economic future will be determined by how quickly we move children from risk to success.

It has been estimated that for every dollar spent on quality preschool, more than seven dollars are saved in averted special education, crime, welfare and other costs.

The fundamentals of family well-being in Oregon are challenged when 16 percent of children are estimated to live in poverty in Oregon.

Across the state poverty among children ranges from 11 percent to 26 percent. Nearly a third of babies are born to unmarried mothers and a fifth of babies are born to mothers with less than 12 years of education.

According to a report published by Children First for Oregon, the key to child care and early education is access. All interaction with parents and providers has a lasting impact on a child's capacity to learn and grow.

But access to quality care is a critical challenge in Oregon. 36 percent of children in Oregon under 13 spend at least a portion of their week in paid child care. And, because of

limited capacity, only 47 percent of children eligible for Oregon Head Start Prekindergarten are in the program.

Every child needs access to and opportunity for good health care. Prenatal care, regular checkups and immunizations are critical investments in the good health care of children.

Access and opportunity for good health care guides the cognitive and emotional development of children. Children face important health care risks without the proper prenatal behavior by their mothers.

Please see **Children**, page 8

## Children

Continued from page 5

The fact demonstrates, however, that not every child in Oregon has the access and opportunity for good health care. Just 81 percent of two-year-olds were up-to-date on their immunizations in 1998.

16 percent of babies born between 1996 and 1998 in Oregon were born to mothers who smoked during pregnancy.

For more information about Children First for Oregon or to obtain a copy of the report call 1-800-544-0376 or email childrenfirst@inetarena.com.

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