

Roseburg, OR
(Douglas Co.)
News-Review
(Cir. D. 20,729)
(Cir. S. 21,156)

2000
Allen's P. C. B. Est. 1888

5038 Risks too high for county's kids

A recent report on the high number of child deaths and infant mortality in Douglas County warrants further study and action.

The study released by a children's advocacy organization, Children First for Oregon, listed the number of child deaths in Douglas County in 1998 at about double the state average. Infant mortality rates were also high.

It's important not to jump to too many conclusions off this report alone. With Douglas County's low population of around 100,000, the percentages can vary dramatically with one or two deaths.

The county has long fought to improve the chances of newborns. The county's health education program reaches out with education and prevention programs.

Dawnelle Marshall, director of the County Health Department's community health division said many of the deaths of children under one year old are due to premature births. One cause could be the high number of smokers in Douglas County.

Marshall said the eight children under one year old who died in 1998 in Douglas County were too many.

"We don't want to lose one baby," she said.

That's the attitude county residents need to take to attack this issue.

The causes of the deaths of older children who died in Douglas County need to be reviewed as well. None were reported as child abuse; all were suicides or accidents.

The threats to the county's children need to be addressed at all levels where a difference can be made. Health, safety, school officials and others all need to increase their involvement in combating this unacceptable situation.