

# Even some insured children lack health care, report finds

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Access to health care for Oregon children depends on more than just having health insurance, warns a new report out today.

Obstacles ranging from a language barrier to a lack of nearby clinics keep even insured children from seeing doctors, the report found.

The 46-page report, "Kids and Health Care: A Look at Access," was compiled by Children First for Oregon, a nonprofit advocacy group. For a copy, call the group at 503-236-9754.

Twenty-two percent of children enrolled in the Oregon Health Plan or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) did not visit a doctor or dentist during the past year, according to state officials.

"Even if they have health insurance, many of these kids are not going to the doctor," said Liz Smith, policy director for Children First for Oregon.

The report identifies economic, family and community obstacles to health care for kids. Besides pover-

ty and a lack of health insurance, obstacles include language differences, inadequate transportation and poor education. In addition, some urban neighborhoods and rural counties are short of primary care doctors, clinics and school-based nurses, the report says.

An estimated 61,500 children in Oregon lack health insurance, despite expanded coverage under CHIP, a federal-state program begun in 1998. CHIP covers children in low-income households inelig-

ible for Medicaid. It is open to uninsured children ages 6 to 18 in households with incomes of up to 170 percent of the poverty line — roughly \$29,000 a year for a family of four.

—Don Colburn

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