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## Children's 'report card' gives Oregon B-

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Of the News-Times

For the first year ever, Oregon has received a better than average grade from the Children First for Oregon organization.

The organization's annual report card rated Oregon with a B- grade - a step forward from a decade of C or below grades.

"We need to remember, however, a "B-" is as much about those finding their way as it is about those still searching for stability," states the introduction to the state report card.

Lincoln County, according to 2000 Children First statistics, is one of those still "searching for stability."

But Oregon as a whole has improved the way children are learning, living and growing.

Some results from this year's report card on Oregon's children:

- 13 percent of children under 18 live in poverty. This number has decreased slightly since 1990 but is still above the 2000 benchmark of 11 percent.
- Seven percent of children under 18 lack health insurance. This is the lowest that this number has been in the past decade and has surpassed the 2000 benchmark of 9 percent.
- Seventy-six percent of low-income rental households do not have affordable housing. The 2000 benchmark for this figure is 70 percent.
- Oregon's infant mortality has had a slight decrease but still remains "one of the lowest in the nation." Last year, 5.8 babies per 1,000 died before their first birthday. The 2010 benchmark is 4.5 per 1,000.
- Twenty-one per 100 children under the age of 13 have available healthcare, which meets the current benchmark goals. Affordable healthcare for toddlers and infants, however, remains difficult for parents to find.
- More than 6 percent of Oregon high school students dropped out last year.
- In one month, 26 percent of eighth grade students reported drinking alcohol. Fourteen percent used illicit drugs and 13 percent smoked cigarettes.
- Fourteen per 1,000 girls ages 10 to 17 are pregnant in Oregon - a figure that has dramatically decreased in the past five years.
- More than 200 youths per 100,000 attempt suicide each year in Oregon. In 1999, 778 reported suicide attempts resulted in death or hospitalization among

youths ages 10 to 17.

The results in Lincoln County are sometimes well below the state average, especially in the areas of child abuse and neglect and juvenile crimes.

The 2000 Children First report on Lincoln County's children shows that the county is 135 percent worse than the state average when it comes to child abuse and neglect. It is believed that 32 percent of this county's children are abused or neglected.

Substance abuse is also higher in Lincoln County, with 38 percent of eighth grade students reporting alcohol use in the past month, 20 percent reporting illicit drug-use, and 21-percent reporting tobacco use.

Suicide attempts in Lincoln County are 37 lower than the state average. In 1999, six suicide attempts were recorded in Lincoln County among youth ages 10 to 17.

The following statistics pertain to middle school students in Lincoln County:

- Seven percent reported missing one day of school last year because they did not feel safe.
- Thirty-nine percent said they were involved with at least one physical fight during the school year.
- Eighteen percent reported carrying a gun, knife or club in the past month.
- Twenty percent reported feeling sad or hopeless continuously for two weeks or more.
- Thirteen percent reported that they have seriously considered suicide in the past year.
- Twelve percent reported being purposefully hit, slapped or physically hurt by an adult family member.
- Eleven percent reported that they do not have a caring adult to talk to when they are worried or scared.

A non-partisan, non-profit group, Children First has tracked the trends and statistics of Oregon's more than 800,000 children during the past decade.

Some positive trends reported in Oregon since 1990 include the amount of child support collected has improved from 50 percent to 70 percent and the teen pregnancy rate has dropped by nearly one-third.

Negative trends include an increase in alcohol use among Oregon's teenagers, a higher teen suicide rate and more low-income renters spending more of their income on rent than they did a decade ago.

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