

Child advocates release new data

According to Children First for Oregon's 2002 County Data Book released last Wednesday, children across the state are being left in harmful and even deadly situations because of an inconsistent and inadequate system of follow-up to reports of suspected abuse and neglect.

According to CFO, the confirmed child abuse victim rate in counties is highly correlated to the percent of investigations.

The 2002 County Data Book presents data on a variety of indicators of child well-being. Key findings for Oregon include:

Safety

□ Nearly one out of every 100 children in Oregon is a confirmed victim of child abuse and/or neglect.

□ Between 1992 and 2001 reports of child abuse or neglect increased by 42 percent (25,622 to 36,303).

□ Between 1997 and 2001, the number of reports investigated to determine whether a child has been harmed or is at substantial risk of harm decreased from 61 percent to only 46 percent.

The percent of reports investigated varies greatly from county to county and these differences are closely related to the rate of victims in each coun-

ty.

Health

□ 77,000 children have no health insurance, despite public health insurance programs designed to cover children in low-income families.

□ 19 percent of toddlers are not fully immunized leaving them vulnerable to disease.

□ More than one in four eighth graders are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight.

Nutrition

□ Hunger occurs year round in Oregon, the state with the highest rate of hunger in the nation; but access to free and reduced price lunch falls dramatically during the summer months and varies greatly by county.

In 2001, only 21,508 of the 135,358 kids who ate free and reduced price lunches during the school year received them during the summer months.

LIZ SMITH
POLICY DIRECTOR
CHILDREN FIRST FOR OREGON
PORTLAND