

The Graphic
Newberg, OR 07/30/03

County child abuse outpaces state numbers

5038
State report finds 12 out of every 1,000 children
in Yamhill County are abused or neglected

By CHRISTIE SCOTTY
NEWBERG GRAPHIC REPORTER

About 282 children in Yamhill County were reported abused or neglected in 2002, according to a new study by the Oregon Department of Human Services.

The results of the annual Status of Children in Oregon's Child Protection System were made public this month and found Yamhill County with higher rates of reported child abuse and neglect than the state average.

The county showed an abuse/neglect rate of 12 victims per 1,000 children, up from a rate of 10.7 in 2001 and 9.5 percent the year before.

The state, on the other hand, averaged 9.7 victims per 1,000 children. That figure held steady from the previous year and was significantly lower than in 2000. County officials have attributed Yamhill County's higher number to strong reporting and follow-up by local agencies. "It does make it look high, but

that's a good thing — we're finding the kids," said Kathleen Robbins, executive director of assessment center Juliette's House.

The state report follows a December, 2002, report by nonprofit Children-First for Oregon. That study, which examined the 2001 period, reported Yamhill County had 12 victims per 1,000 children.

The DHS study showed little of surprise, but surveyors did notice a rise in DHS services to teens. Nearly 30 percent of children in foster care were teenagers, for example, up 5 percent from the previous year.

"This speaks to the fact that abuse and neglect of teens does occur" said Ramona Foley, assistant director of DHS.

Foley said DHS didn't identify any pockets of higher abuse rates in Oregon. She said some counties could have spiked rates in any year because of single incidents — the Bryant family deaths in McMinnville last year drove up this county's fatality rate among children, for instance.

The DHS report also said the Yamhill, Marion and Polk counties region sent 163 children to adoptive parents, while taking in 107 adoptions.