

Report: Oregon failing its children

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WesConn News Service

Head Start pupil Simika Lewis brushes her teeth with teachers and classmates following lunch on Monday at the program.

□ Children First for Oregon gives Oregon a D+ but notes some improvements

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Of The (Bend) Bulletin

The children on the school playground may sound thrilled with life, but their lives may be increasingly difficult, according to new data from the nonprofit Children First for Oregon.

In the group's annual review of Oregon children's well-being, the overall grade dropped to a D+ in 2004, the lowest grade since the group began the review in 1992. In 2003, the grade had fallen to a C-

Online

More information on the report card is available at: www.childrenfirst-fororegon.org.

more at risk, according to the Children First report. The state received its lowest grade within the report card in the area of family financial stability, which encompasses child poverty, housing, hunger, unemployment and child support.

Based in Portland, the nonprofit describes itself as the state's leading voice for children. The organization employs education, research and community building initiatives to communicate with the Legislature, the media and the public.

Its annual report card reflects the status of children's health, education, safety and families' financial stability.

Dramatic state budget cuts have impacted children, said Dan Peddycord, the Deschutes County public health director.

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"This report card is sort of a 10,000-foot reflection of all of those real-life things that are going on in Oregon," he said. "We don't have the programming we had four years ago."

much because of their reliance on federal, not state dollars.

But not everything looks gloomy for Oregon kids. Some good news in the report is that teen pregnancy is at a 14-year low in the state. According to Children First, 26.4 girls (ages

up-to-date on their immunizations in 2003. The year before only 75 percent of 2-year-olds were up-to-date.

Despite cuts to state school funding, the report found that the high school dropout rate is now at its lowest since before

The budget of the Deschutes County Commission on Children and Families, which provides dollars to community nonprofits, is about 50 percent of what it was four years ago, Peddycord said. Some health programs have not suffered as

15 to 17) per 1,000 become pregnant last year. In 2002, the pregnancy rate was 27.6 per 1,000.

The state's immunization rate for toddlers has also improved. The report found that 80 percent of 2-year-olds were

Programs cut over the last four years

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