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Children lead better lives despite family poverty risk

With six of 10 measures of child well-being improving, Oregon rises to 18th nationally in the 2005 Kids Count Data Book

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One of the biggest risk factors Oregon children face is their parents' struggle to find full-time, year-round employment, according to a national study that will be released today.

The number of Oregon children living in low-income families also is on the rise and tops the national average, says the Annie E. Casey Foundation's 2005 annu-

al Kids Count Data Book.

Researchers found that 41 percent of Oregon's children live in low-income families, compared with 39 percent nationally.

About 27,000, or 3 percent, of Oregon children in 2003 lived in low-income households in which no adults worked in the past 12 months. Combined with the fact nearly 300,000 children live in families in which no parent has full-time, year-round employment, it is clear: "Thousands of Oregon children face the negative consequences of poverty or financial instability," said Tina Kotek, policy director of Children First for Oregon, a nonprofit advocacy organization.

Oregon tied with Washington for 36th

place nationally in the percentage of children who live in families in which no parent has full-time, year-round employment.

Seasonal employment, unemployment issues for the past five years and a job market shift — to less full-time and more part-time jobs because employers don't want to pay benefits — are all driving the trend, Kotek said.

Despite the increasing financial instability of families, Oregon made progress in six of 10 measures of child well-being, a lingering upswing driven by economic growth and expanded public and private investments before 2001.

The study, which gauges the quality of

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