

Poverty strikes Oregon children

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State's numbers higher than national average

By the Associated Press and the East Oregonian

PORTLAND (AP) — The number of Oregon children living in low-income households exceeds the national average, according to data in a new national survey.

With 41 percent of Oregon children living in such conditions — compared to 39 percent nationally — the state ranks 30th among the 50 states on that issue. It's one of 10 national indicators of child well-being in the national Kids Count Data Book released by the Baltimore-based Annie E. Casey Foundation.

In Morrow County, 12.3 percent of residents are living at or below the federal poverty level, 21.6 percent of which are children between the ages of 0-17, according to Children First of Oregon's Status of Oregon's Children County Data Book 2004.

That same report indicates that in Umatilla County, 13.3 percent are living at or below the federal poverty level, 16.2 percent of which are children 0-17 years old.

Rural areas of Oregon, like Eastern Oregon, also have shown to have higher poverty levels than its urban counterparts. In 1999, the poverty rate was 11 percent in urban areas of Oregon, while it was 14.1 percent in rural parts of the state, according to the Department of Human Services' Report on Poverty 2004.

Overall, the state ranks 18th in the country for child well-being based on its showing on the 10 indicators, behind bordering states Washington (14th), Idaho (16th) and California (17th).

Tops on child welfare issues were Northeastern states New Hampshire and Vermont; at the bottom were Southern neighbors Louisiana and Mississippi, according to the foundation's report.

Oregon continues to lead the nation in the fewest numbers of low-birthweight babies — only 5.6 percent of the state's babies are born at alarmingly low weights, compared to 7.6 percent of babies born nationally. Oregon's infant mortality rate, at 5.6 percent, is also well below the national average of 6.9 percent, and its rates of teenage pregnancies and

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