

Madras, OR
(Jefferson Co.)
Pioneer
(Cir. W. 3,400)

SEP 13 2006

Allen's P. C. B. Est. 1888

Relief nursery a way to address child abuse

5038

There were 264 reports of suspected child abuse and neglect cases in Jefferson County, according to 2005 Children First for Oregon statistics, with a 16.5 percent rate of confirmed victims in 2004.

That is at least 44 children who could benefit from a Family Relief Nursery in Madras — if the town had one.

A committee is currently forming to discuss implementing a Family Relief Nursery in Madras. Interested citizens can get involved by contacting the MaCAT office at 475-0301.

A Family Relief Nursery provides a nonjudgmental and safe environment that fosters social, physical and emotional growth for children.

Studies have shown that by working with at-risk families with children age 6 weeks to 4 years, child abuse and neglect can be prevented.

The program's goal is to promote a healthy and caring community by working with families to overcome risk factors such as domestic violence, disabilities, and teen parenting. Adding stability to a child's environment is also a goal.

According to the Children

First of Oregon 2005 data book, there were 183 children in foster care in Jefferson County at least once during 2004.

The report states that, "While foster care meets the immediate safety needs of a child, the experience of foster care increases children's risk for future problems. Children need stability and predictability."

Increasing the stability of placements in foster care homes has been shown to be the most significant factor in improving mental health outcomes for foster children.

The federal government defines placement instability as moving a child two or more times per 'episode' or removal from home.

Jefferson County is one of six Oregon counties having a placement instability rate of 25 percent or higher (34 percent according to the CFFO 2005 data book).

The ideal situation for all children is to remain at home with parents and family who can provide the safe and healthy environment children

require to thrive.

The stability that families need can be improved by helping families address problems through prevention work. Family Relief Nurseries can help.

Why paying early pays off

"Society benefits from investing in the youngest members of our community. The Family Relief Nursery model has had tremendous success throughout Oregon as a preventive option that

Child abuse and neglect can be prevented by working with at-risk families with small children.

has kept children in their homes," noted Stan Nowakowski, community advocate with the Madras Area Community Action Team.

"Family Relief Nurseries provide a therapeutic classroom program, an outreach program, parent support, parent skills training classes, home visits, respite care, and basic needs support. Currently, there are relief nurseries in Bend, Cottage Grove, Salem, Portland, Roseburg, Albany, Eugene, and Medford," he said.

The statistics show the importance of a young child's early development and how it

directly impacts the success of their lives.

The cost to go through the Family Relief Nursery program is about \$5,000 a year per child. Without the program's training and help, parents say, their children likely would have ended up in foster care, which costs about \$15,000 per child per year. The annual price of juvenile detention is around \$30,000 and prison \$45,000.

"The price of not investing becomes significantly greater as the child gets older. Our prisons are full of adults who were abused as children. With the high instability rates of foster care in Jefferson County and instances of abuse and neglect, a Family Relief Nursery is desperately needed in Madras," Nowakowski said.

Interested citizens and agencies have been meeting to discuss the feasibility of implementing the relief nursery model in Jefferson County.

Anyone interested in knowing more about this effort should contact Stan Nowakowski at the Madras Area Community Action Team at 475-0301 or e-mail stan@copartnership.org.