



April 2016

Today there are 1,288 children under the age of six in Coos County

What if we could reach each one of those children, starting with pregnancy, and provide them with the latest in-home parenting support, consistent health and mental health care and access to high quality childcare and preschool programs?

Since 2012 **The Coos Coalition for Young Children and Families** has been focused on the importance of supporting positive social and emotional development in young children, so that Coos children will have the best chance of completing high school and succeeding in life.

The Coalition has based its work on decades of research which demonstrates that positive early experiences and relationships shape the architecture of the developing brain, providing a sturdy foundation for all the learning and development to follow. This research tells us that an infant's brain contains 25% of the synapses it will have as an adult brain. **Most thinking, reasoning and language skills are hardwired into our brains by the age of three**, so providing a safe, nurturing and stimulating environment for young children is critical for their success later in life.

In 2016 the Coos Coalition launched a new data platform- - [Visualizing Child Well Being in Coös County](#). This platform allows the Coalition and its partners, community leaders, teachers, parents and other stakeholders to track the well-being of children in Coos over time. It is grounded in the science of human development, which tells us that development is a result of both genes (nature) and environments (nurture).

The indicators of child and family well-being in this tool are organized according to developmental theory and demonstrate how the wider systems of school, health, housing, or even public policy, can have an effect on how a child develops. Research shows clearly that the contexts in which children develop are as important as their genes and this new visualization tool encourages the viewer to look at the whole system surrounding children. The Coos Coalition believes that being able to see and track the conditions affecting families and children in Coos will help us identify the key areas where we are making progress and the areas where the community might be able to make changes and improvements.

The attached report provides a snapshot of the kind of data the Coalition is tracking that may affect the growth and development of young children in Coos County. For more information on the Coalition or to view the entire data platform go to www.investincooskids.com.



Maternal Depression Screening

Research tells us that 20% of all women will experience depression during their lifetime, and research also shows that depression can prevent a parent from providing the emotional and physical care a child needs for healthy development. Parental depression, if not treated, can have a lifelong impact on a child.

- *31% of parents with children under 5 who were enrolled in mental health, family support or healthcare programs in Coös County were screened for depression in 2016. Overall, 14% of those screened in these programs were referred for follow-up and treatment, however, 59% of the mothers in the home visiting program screened positive for possible depression.*



Developmental Screening

Developmental screening helps parents monitor their child's progress in relation to social/emotional and developmental bench marks developed by pediatricians and researchers. In addition, this screening can help to identify children who may be developmentally delayed. Being able to connect children to supportive services early significantly improves the chance for addressing the delay.

- *The Coalition partners, including childcare centers, Head Start, Health Centers, Mental Health and Family Support programs, conducted a total of 948 screenings in 2016 (compared to 232 in 2012) using the ASQ and ASQ-SE developmental screening tools.*

Approximately 20% of those screened were referred for further assessment and follow up. Social/emotional behavior issues continue to be the most sited reason for further assessment and referral.



Effect of Substance Abuse on Young Children

NH is estimated to have the 3rd highest drug use per capita in the US. Not only does substance abuse have an effect on the health and future of an adult user, it can also have an effect on the growth and development of a young child being cared for by that user. In 2016 the partners of the Coos Coalition recognized the increasing danger posed to young children by substance abusing parents or caregivers. The Coalition partners agreed to begin tracking the incidence of substance abuse by parents in their programs.

- *In 2016, Coalition partner organizations reported that the physical, social, emotional development of 19% of children in home visiting programs in Coos were significantly affected by substance abuse and 16% of children in home visiting programs in Coos were being cared for by a non-parent family member, foster parent or grandparent. The Coalition only began collecting this data in April 2016, so we believe that the actual impact of substance abuse, ranging from alcohol to opiates, is even greater than this report.*



Early Literacy

20 % of American children entering kindergarten today lack the basic language skills they will need to learn to read. And children living in poverty are especially at risk. Children who start out with reading difficulties are more likely to remain poor readers and ultimately fail in school. Without intervention, they will grow into adults with low literacy skills and poor economic potential.

- *The Coalition started a Reach Out and Read program in 2010. Since that time 8,171 books have been distributed to children 0-5 in Coos County at well child visits by the three Health Centers in Coos County. In 2016 alone, 1,379 books were given away at well child visits.*

The Coos Coalition for Young Children and Families Partners are:

~Coos County Family Health Services

~SAU 3

~Northern Human Services

~Family Resource Center

~SAU 20

~Project AWARE

~Indian Stream Health Center

~SAU 36

~The Directors Network

~Tri County Head Start

PLEASE GO TO

www.investincooskids.com

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE FACTORS

INFLUENCING THE POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG CHILDREN IN COOS COUNTY TODAY