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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 3, 2016

**CHILD ADVOCACY CENTERS SEE
6.8% INCREASE IN CHILD VICTIMS SERVED**

WVCAN Releases 2016 State Aggregate Data

Charleston, WV — Today, West Virginia Child Advocacy Network (WVCAN) releases its State Aggregate Data for the 2016 fiscal year. The data in the report reflects service from West Virginia's 20 Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) who provided official service to 37 of 55 counties in the state and courtesy services to other counties.

This past fiscal year CACs served 3,518 children – a nearly 50% increase in the last five years. One in every 100 children in WVCAN's service area were seen by a child advocacy center last year. Seventy-five percent of the children served by CACs were under the age of 13, and 16% of children are reported or suspected to have a disability.

Most of children served by WV CACs were there because of allegations of sexual abuse – 70%. A third of alleged offenders were the child's parent, and 99% of alleged offenders were someone the child knows. There were 400 cases with charges filed, and 195 individuals convicted for crimes against children.

Caregivers were surveyed after receiving services and 98% agreed "If I knew anyone else who was dealing with a situation like the one my family faced, I would tell that person about the center."

The report includes data on victim demographics, alleged offender demographics, reported vs. disclosed abuse breakdown, services performed, criminal justice response, and CAC income budget breakdown. The full statewide data report can be found at <http://wvcn.org/media/>.

"As you can see, the number of children we serve is increasing every year. This data helps prove we aren't done elevating the conversation about child abuse in West Virginia," said Emily Chittenden-Laird, Executive Director of the West Virginia Child Advocacy Network. "These children need a voice, and child advocacy centers in West Virginia are here to give them one."

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West Virginia Child Advocacy Network (WVCAN) provides statewide leadership in the fight against child abuse while working side-by-side with the 20 Child Advocacy Centers throughout the state. WVCAN provides training, technical assistance, leadership, legislative and policy advocacy, and overall coordination to Child Advocacy Centers around the state. A CAC is a child-friendly facility in which child protection, criminal justice, and child treatment professionals work together to investigate abuse, hold offenders accountable, and help children heal. Rather than having a child taken from agency to agency

to endure multiple interviews, the CAC model brings the system to the child for an effective, child-centered, healing process. As the statewide authority on multidisciplinary approaches to supporting child victims of abuse, WVCAN's purpose is to empower local communities to provide comprehensive, coordinated and compassionate services to victims of child abuse.