FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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WVCAN RELEASES 2019 STATE AGGREGATE DATA
49,272 WV Children Still Without Direct Access to CAC Services

Charleston, WV — Today, the West Virginia Child Advocacy Network (WVCAN) released its Statewide Data for the 2019 fiscal year. The data in the report reflects service from West Virginia’s 21 Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) which provided official service to 43 of 55 counties in the state. A CAC provides a safe, child-friendly facility where child protection, criminal justice, and child treatment professionals work together to investigate abuse, hold offenders accountable, and help children heal.

Although CACs provide some courtesy services to children in counties without official CAC coverage, approximately 49,272 (or 14%) of the state’s under-18 population lacked adequate access to the full array services they may need to heal and be heard. Full services are currently available to 314,878 (or 86%) of the state’s children.

In the 2019 fiscal year, West Virginia CACs served 4,544 new children – a 58% increase over the last five years. The report includes data on victim demographics, alleged offender demographics, reported vs. disclosed abuse, services performed, criminal justice response, and CAC income budget breakdown. The full statewide data report can be found at here.

Highlights from the report include:
• 54% of the children served were there because of allegations of sexual abuse
• 29% of the children served by CACs were age six or younger
• 95% of alleged offenders were someone the child knew
• 63% of alleged offenders were the child’s parent, step-parent, or parent’s boyfriend/girlfriend
• 18% of children served reported to have one or more disability
• 549 cases had charges filed
• 266 individuals were convicted for crimes against children

Once existing gaps are closed, no child in West Virginia will be more than one hour away from a child-friendly WVCAN member facility, and every center will have equal access to the support services WVCAN provides as centers work to increase their capacity to help more children and families in need.

This past April, together with CACs across the country, WVCAN launched the #SHINE Campaign – a national campaign with WV roots to build a Universe of Support for child survivors of sexual abuse. The campaign aims to end the stigma of child abuse and raise funds to support child survivors in West Virginia. Learn more at www.wvcan.org/whyweshine.
“We anticipate the total number of new children served by child advocacy centers in WV will rise above 5,150 within the next 3-5 years. We are grateful to the Governor and Legislature, as well as our funders, donors, and partners for their ongoing support for the WV Child Advocacy Network. It’s going to take great courage and investment to ensure every child survivor of abuse receives hope, healing, and justice,” said Kate Flack, Chief Executive Officer of the West Virginia Child Advocacy Network.

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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 21 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 coordinated the response around 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.

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