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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

June 4, 2018

**New Legislation on Mandated Reporting of Child Abuse Takes Effect Tomorrow**  
*Following Passage of Senate Bill 465*

Charleston, WV — Beginning tomorrow, June 5, new mandated reporting legislation takes effect in West Virginia. Senate Bill 465, whose lead sponsor was Senator Charles Trump during the 2018 West Virginia Legislative Session, codifies a new mandated reporting law for suspected child abuse and neglect. The legislation simplifies and clarifies requirements for mandated reporting to make them easier to understand and implement without lessening or abdicating the responsibility of mandatory reporters.

Senate Bill 465 was part of recommendations brought forth by the WV State Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Abuse of Children. The Task Force was comprised of a diverse group of stakeholders including survivors of child sexual abuse, social workers, law enforcement, educators, advocates, and lawmakers. Together, they developed recommendations on how West Virginia can protect its children from sexual abuse and will continue work to enact the recommendations.

“Educators are the front lines in identifying abuse. We’re working closely with the WV Department of Education and have already started introducing the new reporting procedures to principals across the state,” said Jim McKay, State Coordinator of Prevent Child Abuse West Virginia.

Over the past decade, changes to the mandated reporting statute have had the unintended consequence of creating a protocol that is too confusing and too complicated. Simplifying the language is intended to increase the likelihood of successful and responsive reporting.

The new law delineates a comprehensive list of mandated reporters including educators, child care workers, medical personnel, social workers, law enforcement, etc. who are in a position of trust for a child, are mandated to report suspected child abuse or neglect. The legislation reduces the timeframe for making a report from 48 hours down to not more than 24 hours after receiving a disclosure of abuse or suspecting that abuse or neglect has occurred. The law also requires mandated reporters to submit their report directly to Child Protective Services and eliminates indirect reporting, which sometimes led to reports failing to be submitted in a timely manner.

There is a huge need for prompt response and reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect in West Virginia. Last year, WV child advocacy centers served nearly 4,000 children when abuse was suspected or disclosed – a 66% increase in the last five years.

“We are excited the Task Force recommendations are moving forward and appreciate the support of all those involved. Simplifying the mandated reporting protocols is a step in the right direction for protecting West Virginia’s children,” said Emily Chittenden-Laird, Executive Director of the WV Child Advocacy Network.

For reporting suspected abuse, call the WV Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1-800-352-6513. This hotline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. To read Senate Bill 465 in its entirety, click [here](#). For a copy of the full report and recommendations from the WV Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Abuse of Children, click [here](#).

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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 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.

**Prevent Child Abuse West Virginia** is a program of TEAM for West Virginia Children (TEAM), a non-profit organization whose mission it is to work with communities and families to promote and advance the well-being of children, making their needs and healthy development a priority. TEAM envisions West Virginia as a state where all children can grow and thrive in safe, stable, nurturing relationships, free from abuse and neglect, so they will achieve their maximum potential as adults. To promote that vision, TEAM operates and partners with multiple statewide programs that provide services, free of charge, with a focus of making the needs and healthy development of children a priority. Over the 30 plus years of our existence, we have served thousands of children and families, providing the opportunity for great childhoods.