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**WVCAN ANNOUNCES STRATEGY TO SERVE CHILDREN IN
ALL 55 COUNTIES WITHIN 5 YEARS**

Charleston, WV — Today, West Virginia Child Advocacy Network (WVCAN) announced plans to officially serve every county in West Virginia within five years. WVCAN will utilize funding from The BrickStreet Foundation and matching funds to encourage Child Advocacy Center (CAC) service expansion to unserved communities in West Virginia.

At the start of the grant, West Virginia's 21 CACs provided service to 38 counties. Four additional counties have been added bringing the total officially served to 42 counties. Counties recently added include: Jackson, Wirt, Taylor, and Barbour.

"We're proud to be able to support the West Virginia Child Advocacy Network and their efforts assisting children across West Virginia," said Greg Burton, head of The BrickStreet Foundation.

A CAC is a child-friendly facility with staff that works to provide children and families professional, compassionate care in order to reduce the trauma often experienced by children that are victims of abuse. 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. The CAC works within a multidisciplinary model that includes child protection, law enforcement, and other treatment professionals with the goal of holding offenders accountable and facilitating healing for the child.

Although CACs provide some courtesy services to children in counties without official CAC coverage, approximately 14% of the state's under-18 population lack adequate access to the full array services they may need to heal and be heard. 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 fiscal year West Virginia CACs served 4,445 children – a 55% increase in the last five years. Thirty-one percent of the children served by CACs were under the age of six. Most of children served by WV CACs were there because of allegations of sexual abuse – 58%.

"Despite the success of the CAC model in helping children who have been victimized by abuse, there's still an outstanding need for more CAC coverage and more support," said Emily Chittenden-Laird, Executive Director of the West Virginia Child Advocacy Network. "We are grateful to The BrickStreet Foundation for their contribution to our expansion."

This funding helps ensure children across the state have access to a CAC when they need it and helps expand capacity and geographic coverage to reach more children and families with the services they need. Matching funds are still needed. Donations are tax deductible and can be made through WVCAN's website at www.wvcn.org/donate.

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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.