WVCAN RELEASES 2020 STATE AGGREGATE DATA

Despite COVID-19 Pandemic, CACs remained open to serve kids

Charleston, WV — Today, the West Virginia Child Advocacy Network (WVCAN) released its Statewide Data Report for the 2020 fiscal year. The data in the report reflects service from West Virginia’s 21 Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) which provided official service to 44 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.

Between the additional stresses that families may be facing due to the pandemic—unemployment, schools closing, and illness—children have been at greater risk of abuse with fewer means to report it.

To ensure that every child had access to needed resources and support during this time, West Virginia’s 21 Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) remained open. CACs provided emergency support to survivors of child abuse and their non-offending caregivers, offered tele-mental health to help kids heal from their abuse, and conducted on-site and ramped-up remote family advocacy to connect kids and families to the resources they needed to survive and thrive.

During this past fiscal year, CACs served 4,404 children – a 34% increase in new children served in the last five years. Highlights from the report include:

- 56% of the children served were there because of allegations of sexual abuse
- 29% of the children served by CACs were six years old or younger
- 96% of alleged offenders were someone the child knew
- 56% of alleged offenders were the child’s parent or step-parent
- 19% of children are reported to have one or more disability
- 645 cases had charges filed
- 179 individuals were convicted for crimes against children
- 323,613 children (90% of the state’s population) live in a county officially served by a CAC
- 35,883 children (10% of the state’s population) live in a county without official CAC coverage

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.

“Now, more than ever, family stress, economic insecurity, and the absence of the network of community support are putting kids at higher risk of abuse, neglect, and exploitation,” said Kate Flack,
Chief Executive Officer of the West Virginia Child Advocacy Network. “We must continue and expand our support of West Virginia’s Child Advocacy Centers, who are on the front lines serving child survivors of abuse and ensuring they receive hope, healing, and justice.”

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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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