



CONTACT:

Stacy Deel, COO
WV Child Advocacy Network

sdeel@wvcana.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 11, 2024

WVCAN RELEASES ANNUAL REPORT ON STATE COVERAGE & SERVICE OUTCOMES

Charleston, WV — Today, the West Virginia Child Advocacy Network (WVCAN) released its Statewide Data Report for the 2023 fiscal year (July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023). The data in the report reflects service from West Virginia's 21 Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) which provided official service to 46 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.

During the year, CACs served 4,879 children – nearly a 10% increase in new children served in the last five years. Highlights from the report include:

- 4,596 forensic interviews were conducted
- 50% of the children served were there because of allegations of sexual abuse
- 14% of the children served were there because of allegations of drug endangerment, 4.7 times higher than the national average
- 43% of the children served by CACs were between the ages of 7-12 years
- 96% of alleged offenders were someone the child knew
- 30% of children are reported to have one or more disabilities
- 566 cases had charges filed
- 263 individuals were convicted for crimes against children
- 326,851 children (93% of the state's population) live in a county officially served by a CAC
- 25,139 children (7% of the state's population) live in a county without official CAC coverage

In the 2023 fiscal year, 66% of children who received a forensic interview at a CAC disclosed abuse. 34% of children interviewed made no disclosure of abuse during the forensic interview. Even when a child does not disclose, the multidisciplinary team may still have good cause to investigate the reports that prompted the child's services at the CAC.

Caregivers visiting CACs are asked to take a survey about their experience. 96% of caregivers surveyed said if they knew anyone else who was dealing with a situation like the one their family faced, they would tell that person about the child advocacy center.

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 [here](#).

“The number of children served by West Virginia CACs is growing each year. Kids are becoming more aware of the issue and the services CACs provide, and ultimately are more comfortable telling someone when abuse happens,” said Kate Flack, Chief Executive Officer of the West Virginia Child Advocacy Network. “We must continue and expand our support of Child Advocacy Centers, who are on the front lines serving child survivors of abuse and ensuring they receive hope, healing, and justice.”

###

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.

This document was prepared under a grant from the West Virginia Division of Administrative Services, Justice & Community Services Section. Points of view or opinions expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the State of West Virginia Division of Administrative Services, Justice & Community Services Section or any entity of the Department of Justice.