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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**WVCAN RELEASES ANNUAL REPORT ON 2024 CHILD ABUSE STATISTICS**

*Allegations of Drug Endangerment is 4x Higher than the National Average*

Charleston, WV — Today, the West Virginia Child Advocacy Network (WVCAN) released its Statewide Data Report for the 2024 fiscal year (July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024). The data in the report reflects service from West Virginia's 21 Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) which provided official service to 47 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 4,909 children – an 8% increase in new children served in the last five years. Highlights from the report include:

- 4,702 forensic interviews were conducted
- 16% of the children served were there because of allegations of drug endangerment, 4 times higher than the national average
- 48% of the children served were there because of allegations of sexual abuse
- 44% of the children served by CACs were between the ages of 7-12 years
- 95% of alleged offenders were someone the child knew
- 30% of children are reported to have one or more disabilities
- 846 cases had charges filed
- 336 individuals were convicted for crimes against children
- 330,147 children (93% of the state's population) live in a county officially served by a CAC
- 22,217 children (7% of the state's population) live in a county without official CAC coverage

In the 2024 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. 97% 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. Highlights from the statewide data report can be found at [here](#).

“In the past year, the number of children referred to West Virginia CACs due to suspected drug endangerment was four times the national average,” said Shiloh Woodard, Interim Chief Executive Officer of the West Virginia Child Advocacy Network. “We must do all that we can to ensure the stability and continuity of our 21 Child Advocacy Centers in the Mountain State so that critical services to child survivors of abuse and children and youth who have been exposed to the opioid epidemic can continue to be provided.”

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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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