**June Media Release Template**

UPDATE ALL HIGHLIGHTED AREAS. USE THE [DFPS DATA BOOK](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Data_Book/) TO PULL STATEWIDE AND LOCAL STATISTICS AS NEEDED. COPY AND PASTE THE TEXT INTO THE BODY OF AN EMAIL TO YOUR LOCAL MEDIA. IF YOU NEED ASSISTANCE WITH DATA OR IDENTIFYING YOUR LOCAL MEDIA, PLEASE CONTACT THE COMMUNICATIONS & AWARENESS TEAM. PLEASE SEND A LINK OR PDF OF ANY COVERAGE YOU GET. GOOD LUCK!

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**YOUR CASA PROGRAM Welcomes and Celebrates LGBTQ Volunteers for Youth in Foster Care**

YOUR CITY, Texas – During June, LGBTQ Pride Month, YOUR CASA PROGRAM is casting a spotlight on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) youth in the foster care system, and the need for LGBTQ and LGBTQ-affirming volunteers to advocate for their safety and well-being.

YOUR CASA PROGRAM recruits and trains Court Appointed Special Advocates, or CASA volunteers, to speak up for the best interest of children in foster care. They are committed to serving all children in care in YOUR SERVICE AREA, including youth who identify as LGBTQ.

It is vital to not only affirm these youth, but celebrate them, explained ED’s FIRST AND LAST NAME, executive director of YOUR CASA PROGRAM.

“LGBTQ kids in foster care are especially vulnerable, and they’re at an increased risk for negative outcomes, so we want to use this month to spotlight and address the issue,” said ED’s LAST NAME. “We support all children in foster care, whatever their sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.”

In Texas and nationwide, LGBTQ youth are overrepresented in foster care, meaning that the percentage they make up of youth in foster care is greater than the percentage they represent of the general youth population. In fact, according to a [study published by the American Academy of Pediatrics](https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/143/3/e20174211), 30 percent of youth in foster care identify as LGBTQ, compared to 11 percent of the general youth population. This is due in large part to the fact that coming out to family members who are not accepting can lead to harassment, abuse and even rejection, making it more likely for these children than their non-LGBTQ peers to experience homelessness or end up in foster care.

LGBTQ youth face even more challenges once they are in foster care, ED’s LAST NAME explained. Not only are they less likely to find permanency, but they have a higher average number of foster placements, higher rates of mental health challenges, and higher rates of reported harassment, discrimination and violence against them.

It is important for CASA volunteers to recognize these realities, ED’s PRONOUN (HE/SHE/THEY/ETC) said, so that they can compassionately and effectively advocate for these children’s needs and help keep them safe while they are in foster care. It’s also critical so that they can have effective conversations with adults in children’s lives about being supportive—[research shows](https://nccc.georgetown.edu/documents/LGBT_Brief.pdf) that even just a little change towards being more accepting for parents, foster parents, guardians and caregivers can reduce a young person’s risk for negative outcomes.

“These kids need people on their side. We want to be able to offer volunteers who really understand the unique challenges they face,” said ED’s LAST NAME. “While all of our volunteers are prepared to advocate for any child, having LGBTQ volunteers is such an asset when advocating for LGBTQ youth in foster care. They can understand and empathize with these kids on a level many others cannot.”

YOUR CASA PROGRAM welcomes, accepts and celebrates LGBTQ volunteers, and calls upon the LGBTQ community to reach a hand out to the LGBTQ youth currently in foster care. Help YOUR CASA PROGRAM provide kids in foster care with an advocate that can truly understand them and their unique experiences.

“We need more LGBTQ and LGBTQ-affirming volunteers. We want to work together with the LGBTQ community to make sure our CASA advocacy is the best it can be for the kids we serve,” ED’s LAST NAME said. “We want to create more positive outcomes for LGBTQ youth, turn around the statistics, and make sure they have the same chance to thrive as any other youth.”

For more information on becoming a CASA volunteer, visit YOUR WEBSITE AND/OR PHONE NUMBER AND/OR [www.BecomeACASA.org](http://www.BecomeACASA.org). The next information session is DATE.

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