**December Holiday Season 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 TEAM](mailto:communications@texascasa.org). PLEASE SEND A LINK OR PDF OF ANY COVERAGE YOU GET. GOOD LUCK!

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**Help Create a Happier Holiday Season for Children in Foster Care & Their Families**

[City], Texas – The holiday season is in full swing. From Thanksgiving to Hanukkah and Christmas and Kwanzaa, there’s something for almost everyone to celebrate and feel a part of a community. While these holidays help bring people closer together, this can be a difficult time for children and families involved in the child welfare system who are not able to spend this time together.

When a family is in crisis and becomes involved in the child welfare system, the children are often removed from their homes and placed in foster care, many times far from everyone and everything they know. This holiday season, [your program name] urges you to be mindful of the children who are spending the holidays away from those they love, and consider how you can help make a difference.

“December is meant to be a festive time to spend with your friends and family,” said [ED’s first and last name], executive director of [your program name]. “Too often, though, children in foster care must spend the holidays away from their family and home community, which can deprive them of many precious memories that can make the holiday season so special.”

This is where Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteers can step in and make the most impact. Appointed by a judge, CASA volunteers’ first priority on cases is to advocate for keeping families together whenever safe and possible. When that is not possible, CASA volunteers recommend that children live with another relative or close family friend to ensure that they can maintain connections to their family and community.

*[Programs can replace with another story if wanted]* Take this true story for an example of the impact of CASA volunteers. When three young siblings were placed in foster care, there was little chance that they would return home to their mom, Crystal. She was estranged from her family and had minimal resources – and after her children were removed she found herself alone when she needed support more than ever.

But CASA volunteers John and Jenifer believed in her. John, Jenifer and the caseworker reached out to some of Crystal’s family members for support. It was a long road, but with CASA and the caseworker’s help, Crystal’s support network went from a few in the beginning to a strong network of family and friends.

With this newfound support, Crystal went above and beyond in completing the state’s requirements for her children to return home. She got her own apartment and a full-time job, and embraced the family supporting her and the kids.

Today, Crystal and her kids are enjoying a routine as a reunited family. They get to spend the holidays at home, together, creating new, happy memories.

Stories like these are the reason why CASA volunteers are so imperative in the lives of children and families in the child welfare system. They need someone who can get to know them and their unique situation, advocate for them, and help ensure they are surrounded by caring people who will support them even after their case ends.

“CASA volunteers stand by children’s side while they are in foster care, providing a consistent presence and ensuring they are kept safe and their needs are met,” said [ED’s last name]. “They also help make sure children stay meaningfully connected with their families and communities.”

According to the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), in [year], [total children in DFPS conservatorship statewide] children were in foster care in Texas alone - [local number of children] in our community. [Your program name] is challenging more members of the community to become a part of the solution by becoming a CASA volunteer.

CASA volunteers get to know a child or sibling group on an individual level and speak with other important people in the child’s life, such as their parents and family, teachers, therapists, foster parents and more. With the information they gather, they develop a holistic understanding of their circumstances and needs, and make recommendations to the court. They advocate first for family reunification whenever safe and possible. They also help find and engage family members and other adults who can serve as a network of support for the child and their parent or parents.

“Each year, more children enter the foster care system and don’t get the opportunity to spend the holiday season at home with their loved ones,” [ED’s last name] said. “We need more members of the community to step up and get involved. You can make a difference this holiday season.”

Consider becoming a CASA volunteer to look out for a child and give them and their family a better chance at a brighter future – and the happy holiday season they deserve. To learn more, visit [www.BecomeACASA.org or your website]. The next information session is [time, date, place].

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