

## Sample Statement/Response to Negative Feedback

Thank you for reaching out and for your support of CASA and the children we serve. We always appreciate feedback and hearing from our community. First and foremost, CASA is committed to our goal of advocating for the best interest of all children in the foster care system. If we are to truly stand by this belief, then to us, all must mean all.

A disproportionately high number of LGBTQ children and youth are in the child welfare system, many having been abandoned by their families due to their LGBTQ identity. Additionally, research shows that LGBTQ young people who were highly rejected by parents and caregivers because of their identity face much higher rates of attempted suicide, depression and use of illegal drugs.

We believe that by accepting and celebrating LGBTQ youth for who they are, and helping others to do the same, we can help these children beat the odds and thrive, both during their time in care and beyond. By showing our support for these youth, we are indicating that our program is a safe and welcoming place for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions. We hope you will continue to support CASA and understand if you feel you cannot.

## Talking Points

- In everything that we do, CASA stands for the best interests of the children we serve.
- LGBTQ youth are overrepresented in the foster care system, both in Texas and nationwide. In fact, according to a [recent study](#), more than 30% of youth in care identify as LGBTQ, compared to about 11% of the general youth population.
- This disparity is due in large part to the fact that for children, coming out to family members can lead to verbal and physical harassment, abuse and even full-on rejection, making them more likely than their non-LGBTQ peers to experience homelessness and/or end up in foster care.
- Transgender youth are especially vulnerable and at risk of bullying, violence, rejection, depression and more. HRC and the University of Connecticut's recent [2018 LGBTQ Youth Report](#) revealed that a majority of transgender youth don't feel safe using the bathroom or locker rooms at school and are often not called by their chosen names or pronouns. Transgender folks as a whole are especially vulnerable to suicidal thoughts and behavior – [approximately 41% of transgender people attempt suicide at least once in their lives](#).
- [According to research](#) compared with LGBTQ young people who were not rejected or were only a little rejected by their parents and caregivers because of their identity, highly rejected LGBTQ young people were:
  - More than 8 times as likely to have attempted suicide;
  - Nearly 6 times as likely to report high levels of depression;
  - More than 3 times as likely to use illegal drugs; and
  - More than 3 times as likely to be at high risk for HIV and STDs.

- Once they are in foster care, LGBTQ youth face all the same challenges and barriers their non-LGBTQ peers face, such as dealing with trauma, placement changes, falling behind in school, mental health challenges and more – but with the added layer of fear of further rejection, abuse and harassment if they are open about their LGBTQ identity.
- Being LGBTQ is not a phase, nor is it something that can be changed. According to research by the [Family Acceptance Project](#), children report feelings of same sex attraction as young as age 7 or 9, and some children begin to express gender identity as early as age 2-3. Practices intended to change a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity [are harmful](#), and have been condemned by every major medical and mental health association.
- [Research shows](#) 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.
- By accepting and celebrating LGBTQ youth for who they are, and helping others to do the same, CASA volunteers and other advocates can help these children beat the odds and thrive, both during their time in care and beyond.

### **Additional Talking Points Around the Need for LGBTQ Volunteers**

CASA is committed to our goal of ensuring that the best interest of children in foster care comes before anything else by providing the highest quality volunteer advocacy possible. To meet this goal, we strive to recruit CASA volunteers of diverse backgrounds and experiences so that they can reflect the diversity of children in the child welfare system in our community.

A disproportionately high number of LGBTQ children and youth are in the child welfare system, many having been abandoned by their families due to their LGBTQ identity. Though all of our volunteers are equipped to advocate for any child, LGBTQ children are more likely to form a deeper relationship with CASA volunteers who have been through similar life experiences and are comfortable having conversations with them about issues unique to their LGBTQ identity. By showing our support for LGBTQ people, we are indicating that our program is a safe and welcoming place for CASA volunteers of all sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions.