**Back to School Media Release Template**

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**Supporting Children & Youth in Foster Care During the School Year**

[City], Texas – The back-to-school season can bring excitement for young people as they prepare to see their classmates again, meet new teachers and students, and explore new subjects. For youth in foster care, however, starting a new school year can feel scary and uncertain, because the odds are stacked against them when it comes to their educational success.

Children enter foster care not because of any fault of their own, but because their families are in crisis. Once they’re in foster care, they tend to face uncertainty and instability—moving from placement to placement, caseworker to caseworker and community to community. Too often, switching placements also means switching schools.

“Having to change schools causes youth in foster care to lose not only academic process, but also connections with friends and mentors. Couple this with the fact these youth are grappling with different types of trauma that can influence their learning and behavior, and it’s no wonder that they tend to have worse educational outcomes than their peers,” said [ED’s first and last name], executive director of [your program name].

According to [data from the 2012-13 school year](http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/1168/texas-blueprint-data-workgroup-infographic.pdf):

* The percentage of students in foster care who attended 2+ schools in one school year (47%) was 6.5 times that of students not in foster care (7%).
* The percentage of students in foster care receiving special education services (24%) was 2.7 times that of students not in foster care (9%).
* The percentage of students in foster care who received out-of-school suspension (16%) was more than three times that of students not in foster care (5%).

OPTIONAL SENTENCE ACKNOWLEDGING COVID-19: What’s more, the pandemic has taken an emotional, physical and academic toll—for some young people this will be the first time they come back to school in person in more than a year; and all students, in foster care or otherwise, will be facing learning losses.

How can we help children and youth in foster care beat the odds and succeed? With CASA volunteers, [ED’s last name said].

CASA volunteers, or Court Appointed Special Advocates, are everyday people from all walks of life who are recruited and specially trained to advocate for children in foster care and provide a consistent, reliable adult presence for them during a difficult time in their life. They are appointed by a judge to one child or sibling group to advocate for their best interest in court, in school and in other settings. They get to know the child and everyone involved in their life, such as their parents and other family members, foster parents, therapists, caseworkers and teachers.

Specifically, CASA volunteers can advocate for children’s education by helping teachers, coaches, counselors and school administrators understand the child’s foster care status and the unique challenges they face as a result. They can also advocate for placement and school stability for the children they serve, because it is best for them to stay in their school of origin whenever possible. In cases where a school change is inevitable, CASA volunteers can help ensure a seamless transfer between schools and lessen the negative impact of the school move on the child.

OPTIONAL: Insert brief educational advocacy success story from your program here.

“Students in foster care face unique challenges, but they deserve every opportunity to thrive just like their classmates,” said [ED’s last name]. Our CASA volunteers can help by providing a consistent presence, communicating with their teachers about their situation, advocating for needed services and making sure the children they serve are set up to succeed.”

In [your county/service area], there are ## children in the child welfare system. [Your program name] has served # children this year, but there are still children without a CASA volunteer to advocate for their needs.

“[Program name] urgently needs more volunteers, especially now that the back-to-school season has begun,” said [ED’s last name]. “Every child in foster care should have an advocate who is committed to helping them be successful. Become a CASA volunteer to help ensure that all children get the support they deserve both in school and beyond – giving them a better chance at a brighter future.”

For more information, visit [your program website or [www.BecomeACASA.org](http://www.BecomeACASA.org)]. The next training/information session is [date/time/place].

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