**April – Autism Acceptance Month 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. PLEASE SEND A LINK OR PDF OF ANY COVERAGE YOU GET. GOOD LUCK!

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**Supporting Autistic Children in Foster Care**

City, Texas – April is Autism Acceptance Month. Around half of the children in foster care have a chronic disability. Autistic children, specifically, are [2.4 times more likely to be in foster care](https://www.spectrumnews.org/opinion/viewpoint/many-children-autism-end-foster-care/) than their neurotypical peers.

This month and beyond, YOUR CASA PROGRAM celebrates the autistic children they serve in the foster care system, and calls for more volunteers to advocate for their best interests.

“We want every child involved in the foster care system to have an advocate by their side while they go through such an uncertain time in their lives,” said ED’s FIRST AND LAST NAME, Executive Director of YOUR CASA PROGRAM. “We are always in need of more volunteers from the community, and we see a special need for volunteers with an openness to better understanding disability culture, and a heart for children with disabilities.”

Autism is an often-misunderstood developmental disability that affects how people think, understand the world, move and communicate. It’s estimated that 1 in 59 people are autistic. Autism looks different for every person. Some autistic people might be extra sensitive to sound or light, others might do repetitive motions like rocking back and forth, and others might love to talk about their special interests. Some autistic people are non-speaking. These are just a few examples—every autistic person is unique and has a different level of support needs, hence the term “[autism spectrum](https://autismacceptance.com/book/all-about-autism/).”

Youth with disabilities are at an [increased risk](https://www.academia.edu/23247460/Youth_with_Disabilities_in_the_United_States_Child_Welfare_System) of experiencing abuse or neglect. Once they’re in foster care, they are more likely to be placed in restrictive, congregate care settings than their peers. They also experience more placement instability and are less likely to be reunified with their family of origin. It is important for CASA volunteers to recognize these realities and the challenges they face, 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.

“Every child and youth in foster care deserves a dedicated advocate focused and dedicated to their unique needs. Autistic young people are no exception,” ED’S LAST NAME said. “These children deserve someone who will get to know them, celebrate their strengths, help them through their challenges and ensure their voice is heard.”

CASA volunteers with YOUR CASA PROGRAM are specially trained and appointed by judges to advocate for a child or sibling group while they are in the foster care system. They advocate for the child in court, school and other settings; and get to know everyone involved in the child’s life, including their parents, foster parents, teachers, doctors, family members and others.

CASA volunteers advocate first and foremost for children to be reunified with their parents whenever safe and possible. When reunification is not an option, they may advocate for the child to live with another relative or family friend or to be placed in an adoptive home. In all cases, CASA volunteers are steadfast, consistent presences for the children they serve, making sure they are safe and have the resources and connections they need to grow and thrive.

 [Insert success story if available. Remember to change names and identifiable information, exact locations and ages.]

An ideal CASA volunteer for an autistic child will be curious, open minded and happy to meet the child where they are—and to advocate for autistic youth to get the accommodations and resources they need to reach their full potential.

“We need more volunteers with an understanding of, or shared experience with, disabilities like autism. We want to work together with this 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 these youth, turn around the statistics, and make sure they have the same chance to thrive as any other youth.”

Just last year, YOUR CASA PROGRAM advocated for # children in foster care in COVERAGE AREA. Yet, some children still don’t have a CASA volunteer to advocate for them. If you’d like to find out more about becoming a CASA volunteer or other ways to get involved visit BecomeACASA.org or LOCAL PROGRAM URL.