

THE IMPORTANCE AND BENEFITS OF RECRUITING IN LGBTQ+ COMMUNITIES



When I was first placed in a group home, my biggest worry was, 'Will people accept me? Will I have to fight?' I've had to fight every day of my life because of my sexual orientation. Gay people have to fight every day to exist. My biggest worry wasn't the 24 other kids there. It was the adults I worried most about. My therapist in my group home didn't know any proper terminology for LGBTQ people. It really made it hard to have a relationship with him or even take him seriously.... My heart goes out to all the people who live in homes that aren't accepting right now. They can't be themselves freely. They can't come out because they're afraid they'll be hurt by their foster families or group homes. **LGBTQ youth are so trapped right now and many of them are in danger. It breaks my heart.**"

– JESSIE – YOUTH WHO HAS EXPERIENCED FOSTER CARE

THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM DOES NOT REFLECT THE YOUTH IT SERVES.

From race/ethnicity to gender identity and sexual orientation, the people who manage and make up the professional child welfare system in Texas (including CASA and its volunteers) do not represent the makeup of children and youth in the system.

LGBTQ+ YOUTH ARE OVERREPRESENTED IN FOSTER CARE.

- Youth who identify as LGBTQ+ make up around 30% of the foster care population.¹ This is approximately 3X the LGBTQ+ population outside of child welfare settings, which means that LGBTQ youth are significantly overrepresented in care.
- This overrepresentation is, in part, due to the added layer of potentially experiencing family harm or rejection because of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.
- According to one study, 39% of LGBTQ+ youth in care had been forced to leave their home because of their identities.²



RECRUITING LGBTQ+ CASA VOLUNTEERS CAN HELP US BETTER ADVOCATE FOR LGBTQ+ YOUTH.

- Having a volunteer from a similar background may help youth build stronger, trusting relationships more quickly.
- Youth may have a higher likelihood of receiving the care and resources they need to be successful when they have a volunteer who understands their unique experiences.

EVOLVING CASA AND OUR LARGE NETWORK OF VOLUNTEERS CAN HELP THE ENTIRE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM BETTER REPRESENT THE YOUTH POPULATION.

- By evolving our volunteer recruitment to bring in more people from the backgrounds and life experiences of the youth we serve, we can be a catalyst for change for the entire child welfare system, which is needed to better serve children and their families.
- Developing diversity in the volunteer population—from a sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression standpoint—helps CASA grow by pushing us to examine gaps or potential biases in our advocacy and processes.

EXPANDING THE NETWORKS IN WHICH WE RECRUIT HELPS CASA GROW.

- When we branch out into new communities and neighborhoods (communities of color, LGBTQ+ communities, men), we expand the reach of CASA's network.
- Since most prospective CASA volunteers come through referrals from existing volunteers, it's important to recruit in new networks to ensure CASA can grow to keep up with our communities and the population of children in care.



LGBTQ+ YOUTH IN CARE HAVE A HIGHER LIKELIHOOD OF NEGATIVE OUTCOMES THAN THEIR PEERS.

- Research shows that LGBTQ+ youth are more than twice as likely as their non-LGBTQ+ peers to report being treated poorly by the foster care system.³
- **LGBTQ+ youth also report experiencing:**
 - » Intensified bias, discrimination and harassment
 - » Increased physical and sexual violence
 - » Poorer school functioning
 - » Higher numbers of foster home placements
 - » Greater likelihood of placement in group homes
 - » Higher rates of homelessness
 - » Elevated probability of depression and substance use

We can change these statistics together!

1. <https://www.childrensrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/2019.02.12-LGBTQ-Youth-in-Unstable-Housing-and-Foster-Care.pdf>
2. <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/lgbtq-youth/child-welfare>
3. <https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/HRC-YouthFosterCare-IssueBrief-FINAL.pdf>