
2023 National Foster Care Month Network Toolkit



This toolkit provides helpful information on how to promote National Foster Care Month in May. We encourage you to make use of the resources to increase overall brand awareness and understanding of your program, and the role of a CASA/GAL volunteer in a child or youth's life.

- National Foster Care Month Overview
- Objective
- Target Audiences
- Customizable Key Messages
- Social Media Guidance and Graphics

The Communications team is available to provide guidance, support and answer any questions: communications@nationalcasagal.org.



OVERVIEW

May is National Foster Care Month, a time for the National CASA/GAL Association for Children to bring awareness to children and youth in foster care in our country and to elevate and gain support for the invaluable service CASA/GAL volunteers provide. CASA/GAL volunteers play a critical role in the lives of children and young people in or at risk of entering foster care.

This year's National Foster Care Month focus brings to the forefront the need to **support mental health needs of children and youth in foster care**. The Children's Bureau's National Foster Care Month [website](#) provides resources to community and national partners, tools for community engagement, and real-life stories from relative and kinship families with experience in foster care to use for content.

OBJECTIVE

Using multiple communications channels and events, National CASA/GAL will promote key messages during National Foster Care Month to raise awareness of children and youth in foster care and promote the critical work of CASA/GAL volunteers for children and youth in the child welfare system.

TARGET AUDIENCES

- Media
- Donors
- Volunteers
- Prospective Donors
- Prospective Volunteers
- Digital Media (Social, Web)

CUSTOMIZABLE KEY MESSAGES

The key messages below can be used to craft web, email, social and other media content for National Foster Care Month in May.

National Foster Care Awareness Month Data

- May is National Foster Care Awareness Month. Each year, more than 390,000 children in the United States are in the dependency court and foster care systems because of experiencing abuse or neglect. A child in foster care, on average, will move into multiple homes and attend multiple schools. All this chaos and inconsistency can have long-term traumatic effects on children and youth.
- Mental and behavioral health is the largest unmet health need for children and teens in foster care, with up to 80% experiencing significant mental health needs due to the complex traumas of separation from family and culture of origin.
 - Up to 80 percent of children in foster care have significant mental health issues, compared with approximately 18 to 22 percent of the general youth population.
 - Youth in foster care are prescribed psychotropic medications at a much higher rate (ranging from 13 to 52 percent) than youth in the general population (4 percent).
 - Because of the complex traumas faced by children and youth in foster care, foster care alumni experienced post-traumatic stress disorder at a rate nearly five times higher than the general adult population.
- Investing in culturally appropriate mental health supports that recognize an individual's identity, culture, and lived experience may improve the effectiveness of services and supports and improve long-term outcomes for children and youth.
- Relational permanency—the ability to preserve and maintain important long-term relationships—is fundamental to the well-being of children and youth in foster care. Maintaining relationships with relatives and kin can increase stability, reduce trauma, and help children maintain a sense of family, belonging, and identity.
- Positive mental and behavioral health for children and youth requires the presence of at least one nurturing, responsive caregiver who is stable in the child's or youth's life over time.

Program Focus

- In observance of #NationalFosterCare Month, [PROGRAM/ORGANIZATION NAME] celebrates (CASA and GAL) volunteers who advocate for the needs of children and youth in foster care, and provide a consistent advocate and reliable resource during times of great uncertainty and transition.
- On any given day, there are nearly [CITY/STATE, STATISTICAL FIGURE] children and youth in foster care in [CITY/STATE] and ___percent have significant mental health needs.

If you do not have statistical figures you can use the following key message:
Nationwide, there are more than 390,000 children and youth in foster care and up to 80 percent of them need significant mental health supports.

- As a consistent, caring adult in a child's life, [PROGRAM NAME] volunteers help the [CITY/TOWN/COUNTY] judges make the most informed decisions for the well-being of the child. These volunteers also help identify resources for the child and their families to help strengthen families and prevent crises before they occur.
- [PROGRAM NAME] provides highly trained volunteers to advocate on behalf of children and youth in the courtroom.

Role of a CASA or GAL volunteer

- Mental and behavioral health support is the largest unmet health need for children and teens in foster care, with up to 80% experiencing significant mental health needs due to the complex traumas of separation from family and culture of origin. (CASA or GAL) Volunteers work with legal and child welfare professionals, educators and service providers to ensure that judges have all the information they need to make the most well-informed decisions for each child.
- Positive mental and behavioral health for children and youth requires the presence of at least one nurturing, responsive caregiver who is stable in the child's or youth's life over time. (CASA or GAL) volunteers provide a consistent advocate, and reliable resource for children and youth during times of great uncertainty and transition.
- (CASA or GAL) volunteers ensure that the child or youth has a stable, caring adult on their side, which research shows improves mental health outcomes, regardless of the circumstances of their case.
- In 2021, 83 percent of child welfare cases nationwide that included a (CASA or GAL) volunteer resulted in family reunification, legal guardianship, adoption, placement with relatives or continued care at home by parents. [THIS MESSAGE CAN BE CUSTOMIZED OR USED AS IS].
- Children and youth with a (CASA or GAL) volunteer are more likely to receive highly tailored case management and timely provision of resources and support services.
- Having a (CASA or GAL) volunteer gives children and youth greater hope and optimism for a brighter future, which are strong protective factors that support positive mental health.
- (CASA or GAL) volunteers not only advocate for children and youth within the court, child welfare and school systems, but also form connections with them that can last for years. A number of young people who age out of the foster care system will maintain a relationship with their (CASA or GAL) volunteer into adulthood.

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE AND GRAPHICS

National Foster Care Month graphics can be downloaded from the member portal. Please remember, when possible, to tag National CASA/GAL Association. Be sure to review the “[Social Media Policies and Best Practices for Network Staff and Volunteers](#)” and “[Social Media Resources](#)” guides on the member portal for additional support.

National CASA/GAL Social Media Handles

- [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#): @NationalCASAGAL
- We also encourage you to use [LinkedIn](#)

Tips for Facebook

- Make your posts engaging by including relevant pictures and videos
 - Photos and videos of happy adults and children, as well as various family structures, can serve as appropriate imagery for National Foster Care Month.
 - Visit the [Photo Gallery](#) on the member portal for images to use for National Foster Care Month.
- Read, comment and interact with Facebook friends and followers.
- Visit National CASA/GAL’s Facebook page for information to share with your friends and followers.
- Use the hashtags **#FosterCareMonth** and **#ChangeAChildsStory** when appropriate.

Tips for Instagram

- Instagram is a visual platform so be sure to use photos.
- Images and 15, 30 and 60-second videos can also be shared on Instagram.
- To learn more about [how to use Instagram](#) or [set up a business account](#), take a look at our [social media resources](#) on the member portal.

Tips for LinkedIn

- LinkedIn is a professional networking site, so keep posts professional, informative and relevant.
- Use visuals: Including images and videos will increase engagement and help content stand out.
- LinkedIn users tend to prefer short and concise posts, so keep your content focused and to the point.
- To learn more about [how to use LinkedIn](#) or [create a LinkedIn page](#), take a look at our [social media resources](#) on the member portal.