



Tippecanoe County CASA
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MEDIA RELEASE

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Tippecanoe County CASA Recognized for LGBTQ+ Inclusion

Lafayette, IN – In 2019 and 2020 Tippecanoe County CASA partnered with the Human Rights Campaign’s All Children-All Families (ACAF) program to implement LGBTQ+ affirming practices. ACAF released its *Change-Makers in Child Welfare 2020* report and awarded CASA with the “You Are Welcome Here” seal. The report and award demonstrate CASA’s commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusivity.

The ACAF report features three tiers of partnership. Tippecanoe County CASA is currently in the second tier, “Solid Foundation for Inclusion.” According to the report, organizations in this tier have, “assessed their practices specific to youth and parents to ensure LGBTQ+ inclusion and acted to make these efforts sustainable for the long-term.”



Tippecanoe County CASA is the only child welfare program in Indiana and is one of four Court Appointed Special Advocate programs in the nation to receive this recognition.

“At Tippecanoe County CASA, we advocate for all children who experience abuse and neglect,” Executive Director Coleen Connor said. “LGBTQ+ youth are overrepresented in the foster care system, and they often face unique challenges. Our program has always valued diversity and inclusion. However, partnering with ACAF has helped us develop clear practices that reflect our long-term commitment to the LGBTQ+ community.”

CASA has implemented policies and procedures to better welcome LGBTQ+ youth and community members, including the following:

- Develop training and resources to educate staff and volunteers on how to effectively advocate for LGBTQ+ youth.
- Display signage in office spaces and online to affirm LGBTQ +youth.
- Change the CASA volunteer application to allow individuals to share their preferred gender identity and pronouns.
- Include pronouns on email signatures and on training nametags.

- Require CASA volunteers to sign a statement of commitment acknowledging their dedication to upholding CASA's policies and procedures, which includes an expansive and inclusive nondiscrimination policy.
- Compile a resource list of LGBTQ+ affirming service providers in northern Indiana.

According to the Human Rights Campaign, LGBTQ+ youth make up approximately 30 percent of all foster youth. They are twice as likely to report being treated poorly in foster care as their non-LGBTQ+ peers. They are also more likely to be placed in congregate care, such as group homes, and they have a greater average number of placements than non-LGBTQ+ youth.

“Every child will have different needs,” Connor said. “Advocating for children successfully means that we are aware of these needs and know how to best address them. Our staff and volunteers have the awareness and resources to advocate for LGBTQ+ youth in Tippecanoe County.”

In addition to ensuring effective advocacy to the LGBTQ+ youth in foster care, CASA is committed to fostering equity and inclusion throughout all aspects of the organization, including staff and volunteers. Volunteers with diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and identities, including members of the LGBTQ+ community, are welcome to apply to become CASA volunteers at www.tippecanoe.in.gov/casa.

About Tippecanoe County CASA:

CASA's goal is to ensure that every child has the chance to reach their full potential in life. Every child has the right to be treated with dignity and respect and to grow in a safe and permanent home. Tippecanoe County CASA trains volunteers to be a voice in court for abused and neglected children. Volunteers take the role of independent factfinders to advocate for the best interest of the child. Each volunteer is a stable and consistent adult presence in the child's life until they reach their permanent home.

Tippecanoe County CASA has advocated for children since 1987 and currently supports over 130 active volunteers. Learn more at www.tippecanoe.in.gov/casa.