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Snohomish County CASA, HRC Join Record Number of Partners Working on LGBTQ+ Inclusivity

SNOHOMISH COUNTY, Wash., January 2, 2023 – Snohomish County’s Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) is proud to be one of 172 child welfare organizations joining the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Foundation’s All Children - All Families (ACAF) program in 2023, as highlighted in a new [report](#). Together, these organizations work to improve the services provided to the LGBTQ+ community, including children in foster care and prospective foster and adoptive parents who are LGBTQ+. This year alone, this multi-organization partnership assessed 9,500+ policies and practices within child welfare organizations to ensure they meet ACAF best practices criteria — approximately 6,000 more than were assessed when this report was first released in 2019. This allowed for over 1.4 million children, youth, and families across 43 states to benefit from these LGBTQ+ inclusive policies and affirming practices.

“Providing children and families with the most inclusive environment in which to grow should always be the number one priority,” said **Phii Regis, Director of HRC’s All Children - All Families Program**. “We are grateful for Snohomish County CASA’s work as part of this partnership — together, we can win the fight for equality and build safe and loving communities at the same time.”

“Our partnership with the Human Rights Campaign is pivotal to our mission, reinforcing our commitment to create an affirming and nurturing space for all youth,” said **Joelle Kelly, Snohomish County CASA Division Manager**. “Supporting and empowering youth means ensuring their voices are heard and respected.”

There are an overwhelming number of LGBTQ+ families who have at least considered adopting or fostering a child in the future, but 55% of them feared being turned away because of their identity, and only 14% knew of an LGBTQ+-inclusive agency near them. One couple was quoted in the report as having been rejected from two child welfare agencies on the basis of their identity before finally being accepted to foster with an ACAF partner agency: “[I] got rejected twice from two different agencies and I didn’t see how going to another agency was going to make any difference. One day I was just browsing online and I found a foster care licensing agency and they [had] the LGBT flag so I called them and I found that, yeah, they’re inclusive to everybody. It’s kind of like it was meant to be.”

With the work of ACAF, a record-breaking 10,650+ professionals were trained in how to make their agencies as inclusive of LGBTQ+ families and youth as possible. Additionally, all partner organizations that earned a Tier of Recognition with the program, such as Snohomish County CASA, now include “sexual orientation,” “gender identity” and “gender expression” in their client non-discrimination policy and communicate this policy to staff and clients. They also documented client forms featuring gender-neutral language, such as “Parent 1” and “Parent 2” rather than “Mother” and “Father,” and they display visual cues throughout common areas to communicate support and inclusion of LGBTQ+ clients and their families.

To learn more about Snohomish County CASA please visit [SnoCoCASA.org](https://www.snococasa.org). To learn more about the All Children-All Families program, please visit <https://www.thehrfoundation.org/about/all-children-all-families>.

About Snohomish County CASA

Snohomish County CASA was established 45 years ago to mobilize caring, quality volunteers from the local community to speak up for the best interests of abused and neglected children in court. Our vision is that every child who needs a voice has a CASA to advocate for their best interests, a forever home, and a bright future. Interested in helping children in need? There are currently over 50 children and youth in Snohomish County waiting for a volunteer to speak up for their best interests. Join the CASA team of volunteers to give children a voice and hope for a bright future. Information and application forms are available on the CASA website at SnoCoCASA.org

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