



all children all families

Achieving Safety, Permanency and Well-Being by Improving Practice with LGBTQ Youth and Families

All Children – All Families Benchmarks for CASA Affiliates

The information below outlines how each of the ACAF benchmarks are applied to participating CASA affiliates.

For more information on each benchmark, visit: www.hrc.org/acaf-casa.



1 Client Non-Discrimination

Definition: The term “client” refers to the youth served by CASA volunteers. This specific benchmark should be interpreted to apply to non-discrimination protections for the youth served.

CASA affiliates must also demonstrate policies and practices protecting paid staff and volunteers from discrimination. This may be done through the same documentation as that submitted for this benchmark or for other benchmarks.

Requirement: The client non-discrimination policy must include the terms:

- Sexual Orientation
- Gender Identity
- Gender Expression

The policy should be recorded within the affiliate’s operation manual or other relevant documentation and be shared with clients and staff members on websites, brochures and lobby areas, etc.

Examples:

Staff & Volunteer Interview Scripts: During staff and volunteer application process, interviewers state the expectation to be open to working with individuals of any sexual orientation, gender identification or gender expression.

Youth Rights Brochure: Each CASA, social worker and attorney informs youth of their rights in the foster care system, including the right to protection from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression. This information is provided in written format via youth-friendly brochure.

“Guidelines & Rules for CASAs”: This information is provided in writing to all CASAs and outlines the CASA affiliate’s LGBTQ-inclusive non-discrimination policy.

2 Employment Non-Discrimination

Definition: The term “employment” refers to the paid staff at the CASA affiliate. This specific benchmark should be interpreted to apply to non-discrimination protections for paid staff at the CASA affiliate.

CASA affiliates must also demonstrate policies and practices protecting youth in care and volunteers from discrimination. This may be done through the same documentation as that submitted for this benchmark or for other benchmarks.

Requirement: The employment non-discrimination policy must explicitly prohibit discrimination based on:

- Sexual Orientation
- Gender Identity

The policy should be recorded in the agency’s operation manual or other relevant documentation.

It is recommended that the policy be publicly available to new applicants and employees on websites, job postings and in the lobby area.

Examples:

Equal Employment Opportunity Policy: The policy explicitly states the affiliate does not discriminate based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

③ Employment Non-Discrimination

Definition: The term “employment” refers to the paid staff at the CASA affiliate. This specific benchmark should be interpreted to apply to non-discrimination protections for paid staff at the CASA affiliate.

CASA affiliates must also demonstrate policies and practices protecting youth in care and volunteers from discrimination. This may be done through the same documentation as that submitted for this benchmark or for other benchmarks.

Requirement: The employment non-discrimination policy must explicitly prohibit discrimination based on:

- Sexual Orientation
- Gender Identity

The policy should be recorded in the agency’s operation manual or other relevant documentation.

It is recommended that the policy be publicly available to new applicants and employees on websites, job postings and in the lobby area.

Examples:

Equal Employment Opportunity Policy: The policy explicitly states the affiliate does not discriminate based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

④ Agency Forms

Note: We recognize that many forms are not controlled by CASA affiliates. This benchmark applies to the forms that CASA affiliates do control.

Requirement: Provide forms and internal documents that have LGBTQ-inclusive language related to family and relationship status.

“LGBTQ-inclusive language” may include but is not limited to:

- Providing options of “parent 1” and “parent 2” rather than “mother” and “father”
- Providing option of “partnership” in addition to “married.”
- Providing option of “partner” or “significant other” in addition to “spouse.”

Examples:

Intake Forms: A form completed by CASA applicants that explicitly asks whether a prospective volunteer is comfortable working with clients of any sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

⑤ Staff Training

Definition: The terms “staff” & “employees” refer to paid staff of CASA affiliates. This benchmark should be interpreted to apply to trainings for staff. CASA training is assessed through benchmark 9 (see below).

Requirement: Provide documentation of comprehensive employee training related to working effectively and competently with the LGBTQ community.

Provide documentation of role-specific training in working effectively and competently with the LGBTQ community.

Provide documentation of staff in-service trainings focused on supporting the LGBTQ community at least once a year. These trainings address specific skills in order to enhance cultural competency working with LGBTQ clients.

Examples:

Training Curriculum Outline: Training curriculum used to train staff includes explicit LGBTQ content meeting core objectives outlined by ACAF.

⑥ Staff Advocates

Definition: A “staff advocate” is a staff member or volunteer known to be particularly competent in LGBTQ issues, who also serves as the authority for CASAs, staff and volunteers encountering challenges related to LGBTQ clients.

Requirement: Describe the role of affiliate’s staff advocate for LGBTQ clients. This advocate (sometimes called ombudsperson or champion) is identified to all staff, volunteers and clients and is charged with resource collection and dissemination, advocacy, support and intervention specifically for LGBTQ clients. It is recommended that this role be formalized as the authority on LGBTQ clients in the affiliate’s organizational structure by informing volunteers and staff of their expertise, duties and capabilities as a specialized advocate for LGBTQ clients.

Examples:

Assigned Staff Member: Information on affiliate’s specific staff member (e.g., program manager), who is easily accessible to all staff and volunteers, assigned to Staff Advocate role.

7 Client-Based Feedback & Community Expertise

Definition: A “client-based feedback” system (e.g. committee, group, survey, etc.) regularly provides client’s thoughts and advice to the affiliate’s administration, the term “client” referring to youth served.

A “community expert” is a staff member, board member, community partner or collaborator that specializes in issues surrounding serving LGBTQ youth.

Requirement: Demonstrate how affiliate’s client-based feedback system includes and engages LGBTQ members or allies in a meaningful way.

Describe affiliate’s access to a community expert in competent practice and delivery of service to LGBTQ youth.

Examples:

Youth Panels: A group of current and former foster youth who write and perform pieces related to their experiences in care for community members and service providers.

Annual Achievement Reviews: Conducted by the affiliate, these reviews engage CASAs in providing feedback to the affiliate.

State CASA: Engaging affiliate’s State CASA office to provide LGBTQ-related resources and trainings.

8 Agency Environment & External Communications

Definition: The term “clients” refers to youth served by CASA.

Requirement: Provide documentation of visual cues throughout common areas that communicate support and inclusion of LGBTQ clients and allies, such as:

- Having LGBTQ families and/or youth on websites and printed materials.
- Having pictures, symbols, art, magazines, brochures or handouts that convey LGBTQ support or inclusion.

Demonstrate their commitment to working with LGBTQ clients and their families explicitly and consistently in their external communications (website, printed materials, etc.), such as:

- Posting an inclusive non-discrimination policy on the affiliate’s website.
- Having all printed/web content reflect inclusive language.

Document efforts to reach out to LGBTQ individuals in CASA recruitment activities.

Examples:

Posters: Safe Space and Ally posters showcasing rainbow symbols and other LGBTQ-inclusive images in public areas and offices.

Recruitment/Ad Placement in LGBTQ Press: An article recruiting prospective CASAs on a website tailored to the LGBTQ community.

9 Training and Support for Resource Families (CASAs)

Definition: CASA affiliates should interpret the term “family” to mean CASAs. This benchmark applies to the training of CASAs.

Requirement: Document LGBTQ-specific examples and exercises in the CASA training. Specifically, trainings provide information on creating a safe and affirming environment for LGBTQ youth.

Describe efforts to ensure trainers are prepared to deliver this content, create a welcoming environment for all CASAs and address any LGBTQ-related questions and concerns.

Document LGBTQ-inclusive ongoing support and education to existing CASAs.

Examples:

Training Curriculum: Documentation of the CASA training curriculum that explicitly covers the unique needs and experiences of LGBTQ youth in care.

- Riverside County’s curriculum provides the training “Advocating for LGBTQ Youth in Foster Care” to CASAs, to fulfill the comprehensive training requirements for working with LGBTQ youth in California.
- “Advocate Pride” is another curriculum used to train staff, CASAs, and others.

10 Client Services & Referrals

Definition: Interpret Question 3 as the process of identifying safe and affirming CASA volunteers instead of “resource families” and provide a short description of the process, if the affiliate has one already.

Interpret Question 4 as whether there is a safety plan for LGBTQ and gender-nonconforming youth who come out to a CASA volunteer that is not affirming.

Both Question 5 and 6 are not applicable to CASA affiliates so check “No” for both.

Requirement: Demonstrate ongoing efforts to address LGBTQ inclusion and cultural competence across all services.

Provide list of LGBTQ-competent referrals for external client services.

Describe process to identify safe and affirming volunteers for LGBTQ youth.

Note: Benchmark 10d is not applicable to CASA affiliates.

Examples:

Referral List: Engage local LGBTQ community center to create list of LGBTQ competent referrals.