



all children  
all families

# Change-Makers Report

May 2025



## Message from the Senior Vice President of HRC Equality Programs

Dear Friends and Allies,

It has been a true honor to help shape and guide All Children - All Families (ACAF) from its inception in 2007 to the robust, nationally recognized program it is today. When we first launched ACAF, the primary goal was to remove barriers between agencies seeking highly qualified resource families for *all* children and the many LGBTQ+ adults who dreamed of building a family through foster-adoption but did not trust that the system would welcome them. After several years of successfully chiseling away at these barriers and seeing the beautiful result of more LGBTQ+ folks successfully completing the foster-adoption process, agencies asked us to help them move the needle for LGBTQ+ youth in their care. In 2011, we responded by expanding the scope of ACAF to offer a comprehensive approach to LGBTQ+ inclusive policies and practices, ensuring that all children and all families are welcome, safe, and respected. We are grateful to and impressed by the hundreds of agency leaders and staff who chose HRC as a partner in this work. We learned so much from all of you, and we know that the success of ACAF is a result of deep trust and collaboration. As we prepare to transition the leadership of ACAF to our great colleagues at the University of Connecticut's National SOGIE Center, I want to thank the many child welfare experts and leaders who championed this work along the way and offered their wisdom when we most needed it. Finally, I want to thank Phii Regis, my colleague at HRC, who, for the past ten years, has provided diligent, heart-driven leadership to ACAF. Keep doing the great work, folks—our community needs you more than ever.

With deep gratitude,  
Ellen Kahn (she/her)  
HRC Equality Programs, Senior Vice President





## About the All Children - All Families Program

For nearly two decades, HRC Foundation's All Children - All Families (ACAF) program has been the go-to resource for child welfare systems working to improve services to LGBTQ+ youth and families. Utilizing ACAF's organizational framework, technical assistance, and model policies, agencies assess and ultimately implement a set of best practices – ACAF's "Benchmarks of LGBTQ+ Inclusion". Agencies that implement these Benchmarks are formally recognized in ACAF's Change-Makers Report at three different certification levels or "Tiers of Recognition" – Building Foundation for Inclusion, Solid Foundation for Inclusion, or Innovative Inclusion – depending on the number of LGBTQ+ inclusive policies and affirming practices an agency implements. As part of this engagement process, agency staff receive annual role-specific LGBTQ+ inclusion training at no cost by means of online learning offerings from All Children - All Families.

As noted above, the management of the ACAF program is transferring to our partners at The National SOGIE Center – a collective of organizations (including HRC) that work to improve the lives of children and youth with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions (SOGIE) involved in systems of care. Housed at the University of Connecticut, this collaborative currently provides training, technical assistance, and implementation support. There will be a transition period over the next two years, as The National SOGIE Center integrates the ACAF program into its scope of work. You can learn all about their amazing work [here](#), and visit the ["call to action"](#) section later in the report for opportunities to continue the work during this time.

*"[A] client disclosed that they were transgender and go by they/them pronouns. They stated they didn't know what to do, that the world isn't safe, and asked how they would tell their parents. Client was concerned about how this information would adjust their parent's dreams for them. Client shared that they had known for a while that they were transgender but were not really accepting themselves. The clinician brought the parents into sessions and by the end of treatment the client shared that they felt like [there] was meaning to life now and there was something that their life was meant for. This was a significant transformation from when they initially came in where they didn't think their life was worth living. The client shared 'I have plans, I'm going to change the world!'"*

**-ACAF Agency**



## INTRODUCTION

We are excited to celebrate 157 child welfare agencies employing over 36,000 professionals and annually serving more than 850,000 children, youth, and families that partnered with All Children - All Families in the 2024-2025 Engagement Cycle to implement LGBTQ+ inclusive policies. At a time when anti-LGBTQ+ legislation and rhetoric continues to sweep across the country, the continued participation of these change-makers illustrates a deep resolve for LGBTQ+ inclusion and affirms the essential role of inclusive practice in achieving the goals of safety, permanency and well-being.

This report serves to reinforce that ACAF's Benchmarks of LGBTQ+ Inclusion are well-established best practices, and that despite the current political climate, they continue to stand the test of time. We encourage organization leaders reading this report to determine how they can implement these evidence-based policies that have been proven to improve services to LGBTQ+ children, youth, and families.

You will find the [complete list of these best practices](#) later in the report along with key considerations that should be taken into account prior to implementation given the political landscape (e.g. consulting with your organization's general counsel to ensure you remain in compliance with regulations).

Stakeholders can utilize [the list of recognized agencies](#) in this report to determine which agencies are leading on inclusion in your area, identify opportunities to pioneer this work in your vicinity, or simply to be inspired by the growing movement of agencies committed to equality. Members of the LGBTQ+ community can use this report to identify affirming adoption and foster care agencies or to connect with a local Court Appointed Special Advocate affiliate to support youth in the child welfare and juvenile justice system.

**Note for readers:** We are excited to share the 2025 All Children - All Families report exclusively within networks of child welfare leaders, advocates, and stakeholders who understand the importance of LGBTQ+ inclusion! When sharing this report, we ask readers to be mindful of distributing it to those who value this work.



## IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

There are two key pillars to ACAF's systems change work – implementing inclusive policies and training child welfare staff on providing affirming services.

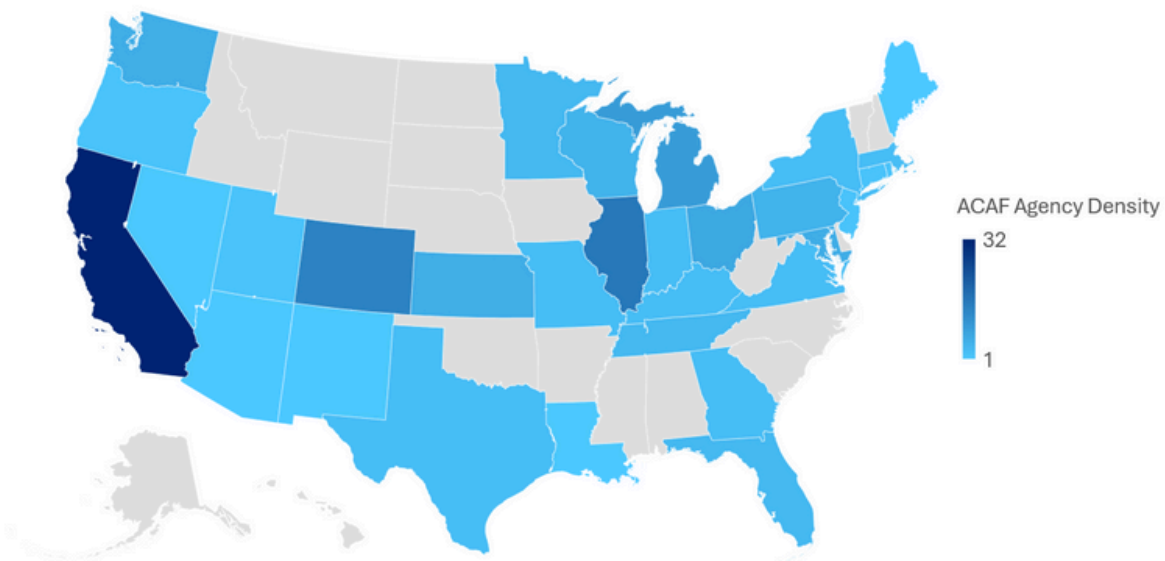
## POLICY & PRACTICE ENGAGEMENT

2024 - 2025 Cycle



## PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

The map below provides a visual representation of ACAF's impact across the nation. Take a look to see which states have the most ACAF representation, and see if your state is included!



[Click here to see the list of agencies](#)



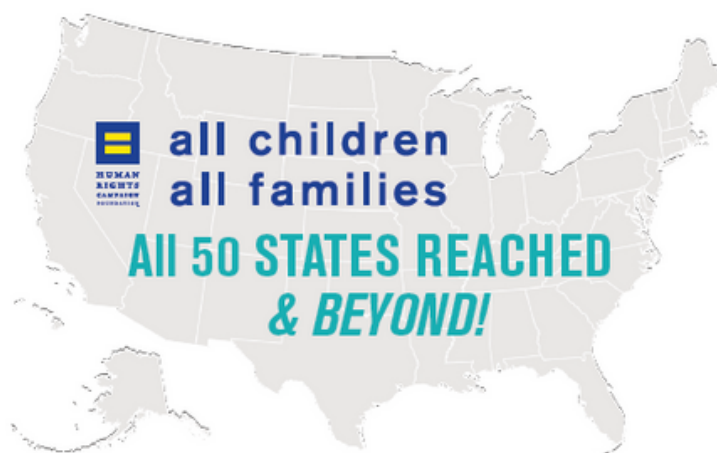
More on the agencies included in this report:

<b>95%</b> of Participants Achieved a Tier of Recognition	<b>35%</b> of Participants Earned the Highest Tier of Recognition	<b>25</b> First-Time Participants <b>132</b> Returners	<b>24</b> Returners Achieved a Higher Tier of Recognition
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## STAFF TRAINING: 2024 - 2025

In 2024, ACAF innovated our system for delivering asynchronous online learning offerings with the launch of [HRC LEARN](#), a dynamic learning management system that improved the accuracy of course assignments and empowered agencies to track staff progress.

<b>35</b> Online Learning Offerings	<b>13,850+</b> Professionals Trained	<b>700+</b> Organizations Represented Among Attendees
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## PROGRAM IMPACT FROM 2019 - 2025

The All Children - All Families program was originally developed by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation (HRCF) and has been housed at HRCF for over eighteen years. During that time, the program has worked with hundreds of agencies to assess thousands of policies and train tens of thousands of professionals. As the ACAF program prepares to transfer to The National SOGIE Center at the University of Connecticut, we're taking a look back at the program's impact since the launch of our first report in 2019. Over 650 agencies have reached out to ACAF over the years seeking guidance on best practices for serving LGBTQ+ youth and families, and over 200 of those agencies took their ACAF collaboration a step further by formally implementing the program's Benchmark policies and earning recognition from the program.

The table below reflects ACAF's expansive impact since the launch of our first report in 2019. It also provides a snapshot of the program's cumulative impact.

	2019	Cumulative Impact 2025
Number of Agencies	71	200+
Youth & Families Served	352,750	5.4 Million+
People Employed	10,670	146,500+
Professionals Trained	1,527	53,000+

## PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

The lists below include agencies that have engaged in LGBTQ+ inclusive policy and practice change with All Children - All Families during the 2024-2025 Engagement Cycle.

The three agency lists in this section reflect the different Tiers of Recognition an organization can earn with ACAF based on the number of policies and practices implemented. A breakdown of these Tiers can be found in [Appendix A](#). The lists are also separated by the three main types of participating organizations. For an explanation of the different organization types, see [Appendix B](#).

*Note: Some agencies elected not to be publicly listed.*

## BUILDING FOUNDATION FOR INCLUSION



Organization Name	Location
<b>CASA</b>	
Canopy Center	Madison, WI
CASA of Jackson County	Kansas City, MO
CASA of Jefferson & Gilpin Counties	Golden, CO
Kids' Voice of Indiana	Indianapolis, IN
Rappahannock CASA	Fredericksburg, VA



Private - Child Welfare	
All Faiths Children's Advocacy Center - Adoption Services	Albuquerque, NM
All for Kids	Los Angeles, CA
Connecting Hearts Adoption Services	Orlando, FL
Cornerstones of Care	Kansas City, MO
Cumberland Youth and Family Services - Foster Care and Adoption Program	Denton, TX
Foster Kinship	North Las Vegas, NV
Greenlight Family Services	Chicago, IL
Heart of Adoptions Alliance, Inc. - Hearts to Home Program	Tampa, FL
Hephzibah Children's Association	Oak Park, IL
Hillsides - Campus Based Services	Pasadena, CA
Kaleidoscope Inc.	Chicago, IL
KVC Behavioral Healthcare Kansas Inc.	Olathe, KS
Let It Be Us	Barrington, IL





NET Centers: Foster Care, Permanency, and Parenting Collaborative	Philadelphia, PA
Saint Francis Ministries	Salina, KS
Stanford Sierra Youth & Families - Pathways to Permanency	Sacramento, CA
The Children's Center	Detroit, MI
The Harbour, Inc.	Park Ridge, IL
Therapeutic Interventions Inc.	Nashville, TN
<b>Public - Child Welfare</b>	
Minnesota Department of Children, Youth & Families - Child Safety & Permanency Division	Saint Paul, MN
New Jersey Department of Children & Families - Child Protection & Permanency Division	Trenton, NJ





## SOLID FOUNDATION FOR INCLUSION

Organization Name	Location
<b>Adoption Exchange</b>	
Coalition for Children, Youth & Families	Milwaukee, WI
<b>CASA</b>	
CASA - Voices for Children	Corvallis, OR
CASA of Orange County	Orange, CA
CASA of the Continental Divide	Dillon, CO
CASA Sacramento	Sacramento, CA
<b>Private - Child Welfare</b>	
A Baby Step Adoption	Reading, PA
A Greater Hope - Adoption & Foster Care Services	Victorville, CA
A Loving Choice Adoption Associates	Shrewsbury, NJ
Adoption & Beyond, Inc.	Overland Park, KS
Adoption Choice Inc.	Glendale, WI



Arbor Circle - Adoption & Foster Care Services	Holland, MI
Ascentria Care Alliance - Children and Family Services	Worcester, MA
Boys & Girls Village - Permanency Services	Milford, CT
Child Crisis Arizona - Adoption & Foster Care Services	Mesa, AZ
Community Youth Services - Foster Care & Independent Living Services	Olympia, WA
D.A. Blodgett - St. John's	Grand Rapids, MI
Five Acres Foster/Adoptive Family Agency - Foster Care & Adoption Services	El Monte, CA
Jewish Family Service of Nashville & Middle Tennessee Inc. - Adoption Journeys	Nashville, TN
Journey to Josiah Inc.	Baltimore, MD
Little City Foundation - Foster Care & Adoption Program	Chicago, IL
Lutheran Social Services of Illinois - Children's Community Services	Des Plaines, IL
NAFI Connecticut Inc. - Foster Care Services	Hartford, CT
National Youth Advocate Program, Inc.	Columbus, OH



New Directions Youth & Family Services - Foster Care & Adoption Department	Amherst, NY
NOAS	Warren, OH
Pact, An Adoption Alliance - Placement Team & Adoption Agency Services	Emeryville, CA
Wayfinder Family Services - Foster Care and Adoption	Los Angeles, CA
Youth Oasis	Baton Rouge, LA
<b>Public - Child Welfare</b>	
Arapahoe County Department of Human Services - Child and Adult Protection Services	Aurora, CO
Jefferson County Human Services, Division of Children, Youth, Families, and Adult Protection	Golden, CO





## INNOVATIVE INCLUSION



Organization Name	Location
<b>Adoption Exchange</b>	
Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange	Boston, MA
Raise the Future	Denver, CO
<b>CASA</b>	
CASA of Lexington	Lexington, KY
CASA of the River Region	Louisville, KY
Child Advocates of Silicon Valley	Milpitas, CA
Snohomish County Office of the CASA	Everett, WA
Voices for Children	San Diego, CA
<b>Private - Child Welfare</b>	
360 Youth Services - Youth in Care Program	Naperville, IL
Adoption Options	Denver, CO



Adoptions From The Heart	Wynnewood, PA
Amara	Seattle, WA
Aviva Family and Children's Services - Foster Family & Adoption Services	Los Angeles, CA
Bayfront Youth & Family Services	Long Beach, CA
CHNK Behavioral Health	Covington, KY
Creative Community Services Inc.	Norcross, GA
Every Child Inc. - Family Support	Pittsburgh, PA
Extraordinary Families	Los Angeles, CA
Forever Families	Livonia, MI
Forever Families Through Adoption Inc.	Rye Brook, NY
FosterAdopt Connect	Independence, MO
Fostering Futures	Ann Arbor, MI
Hands Across The Water Inc.	Ann Arbor, MI



Jewish Family and Children's Service of Greater Philadelphia - Open Arms Adoption Services	Philadelphia, PA
JustChoice	Worthington, OH
Lawrence Hall	Chicago, IL
Lighthouse Youth & Family Services - Out of Home Care Services	Cincinnati, OH
Lutheran Child & Family Services of Illinois	Oakbrook Terrace, IL
McKinley Children's Center	San Dimas, CA
Miriam's Promise	Nashville, TN
Northwest Resource Associates	Seattle, WA
Paths for Families	Greenbelt, MD
Spence-Chapin Services to Families & Children	New York, NY
The Center for Youth & Family Solutions	Peoria, IL
TLC Child & Family Services	Sebastopol, CA
Utah Foster Care	Murray, UT
Vista Del Mar Child and Family Services - Adoption & Foster Care Services	Los Angeles, CA



Public - Child Welfare	
Prince George's County Department of Social Services - Child, Adult & Family Services Division	Landover, MD
Washington County Department of Social Services - Child Welfare Division	Hagerstown, MD



**Agencies that are still in progress towards earning a Tier of Recognition are celebrated in this report for beginning their LGBTQ+ inclusion journey.**

- A Family for Every Child (Eugene, OR)
- Beech Brook (Cleveland, OH)
- CASA of Johnson and Wyandotte Counties (Overland Park, KS)
- Department of Human Services for the City of Charlottesville (Charlottesville, VA)

*"C identified as non-binary and preferred pronouns they/them and had chosen a new name...Both of C's parents and their stepmother refused to use their preferred pronouns and name. The caseworker worked with the family to help them become more accepting of C's identity... Although it took time, over the course of the case the adults in C's life came to respect their name and pronouns."*

**-ACAF Agency**





## CALL TO ACTION

As we navigate this increasingly anti-LGBTQ+ landscape, it is essential for us to make connections with communities of like-minded peers. This can aid us in employing our collective power by combining resources and skills, offering a sounding board for barriers we are encountering, and utilizing shared expertise to develop effective solutions. It can also provide us with an extensive support network, which is a crucial component to continuing this work, as we cannot sustainably do this alone.

During these unprecedented times, it is more imperative than ever that each and every one of us does our part to help ensure safety, permanency, and well-being for LGBTQ+ children, youth, and families. If we know that inclusive policies may not be readily available in the systems we work in, then it is critical that we fill that gap to the best of our ability. Let us all keep in mind that having at least one supportive adult in an LGBTQ+ young person's life can make a life-saving difference. May we serve in that capacity to as many youth and families as we can.

If you are based in a state or municipality that stands by LGBTQ+ inclusion, it is more important than ever to be explicit, e.g. posters, lanyards, pride flags, etc., so that folks, especially young people, feel more safe. If you have limitations in how public you can be with your inclusion work, remember that anchoring your practice with the goal of optimizing safety and emotional wellbeing for LGBTQ+ youth transcends any laws and policies, and simply acknowledging to young people that things are very challenging right now can go a long way.

We call on all child welfare professionals and stakeholders to dig into your resilience and do what's necessary for your self-care in order for you to continue this work and help you show up in this challenging moment. Use the resources below to reflect on your agency's policies, connect with at least one organization listed in the report, collaborate with peers in your local communities; whatever you choose to do, it's important that we all take the actions that we can!

## TOOLS & RESOURCES FOR CONTINUING THE WORK

### All Children - All Families:

- **Implementing ACAF's Benchmarks of LGBTQ+ Inclusion**

- **Questions and Considerations**

- Later in the report, you'll find tips from our team on items that should be evaluated prior to the implementation of the best practices. If you've already completed the implementation period, you can still utilize these as guidance for what to consider to keep policies or practices in place.

- **Independent Self-Assessment Tools**

- During ACAF's transition period to The National SOGIE Center, the online Agency Self-Assessment (ASA) tool will not be available. However, the team has developed guides for each Tier that combine the ASA's organizational framework with guidance typically provided during technical assistance, which can be used to continue the work independently.

- [Building Foundation for Inclusion](#)
    - [Solid Foundation for Inclusion](#)
    - [Innovative Inclusion](#)

- **Staff Training via HRC LEARN**

- While management of ACAF is transferring to The National SOGIE Center, the program's online learning offerings will remain accessible via HRC's learning management system, HRC LEARN. You can find guidance on how to access the tool [here](#).



## The National SOGIE Center

- **Website with Resources**

The National SOGIE Center's website includes a plethora of resources on LGBTQ+ inclusion. From model policies and workforce initiatives to trainings and technical assistance, check out the amazing support tools that are available.

- **Newsletter**

We encourage all report readers to subscribe to The SOGIE Center's newsletter to keep up with the latest resources and learn about key updates.

## BENCHMARKS OF LGBTQ+ INCLUSION

At the core of the All Children - All Families organizational framework for implementing LGBTQ+ inclusive policies and practices are the Benchmarks of LGBTQ+ Inclusion listed below. The benchmarks are organized into seven main areas of inclusive policies and affirming practices that organizations should implement to best serve LGBTQ+ children, youth, and families.





## QUESTIONS & CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING BEST PRACTICES

When navigating the current political landscape, it is important that we ask certain questions of our teams or make certain considerations regarding the implementation of LGBTQ+ inclusive policies and practices. This can assist us in mitigating potential risks we may encounter in the anti-LGBTQ+ climate we find ourselves in. We've included some of our recommendations below:

### 1. Utilize your Agency's General Counsel

It's critical to ensure that your General Counsel is aware of the policies and practices you're planning to implement, and has the opportunity to review federal, state, and municipal policies to determine and mitigate the level of risk to your agency. If your agency does not have a General Counsel, there are advocacy organizations like the Human Rights Campaign that can help your agency gain an understanding of your legislative landscape.

### 2. Protecting Client Confidentiality

When implementing certain best practices, especially those involving data collection of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, it is important to prioritize client and staff safety. Ideally, such consideration would be evaluated prior to implementing any data collection measures, but if they have already been set up at your agency, conducting a review of current processes may be necessary.

- Evaluate whether the SOGIE data being collected can be requested by any external actors, especially those that may be anti-LGBTQ+. If that is the case, there's a chance that your agency may want to hold off on formalized SOGIE data collection at this time.
- Ensure your agency's data collection system is secure and that SOGIE data is only available to those who need that information to provide services.
- Discuss the potential risks with youth and families regarding data collection in this political climate. They should be aware that your agency is doing its due diligence, but that (depending on your area) there may still be some level of risk involved in the data being requested by external actors.

### 3. Connecting with Like-Minded Local Peers

In order to continue this work in this challenging environment, it's vital that you're not doing it alone. When implementing policies and practices - especially when you encounter a barrier - reach out to local agencies that are also engaging in LGBTQ+ inclusive practice for guidance on how to navigate the matter. National partners can also be helpful, but local peers will have more context of your state or municipal laws to determine a solution that is most relevant to your area.

### 4. Be Mindful of the Core Goal(s) of the Best Practice

How do we ensure that best practices are enshrined in the culture of our agencies? Even if the policies must be amended to be less explicitly LGBTQ+ inclusive, are there opportunities to ensure we're not losing what's at the core of these best practices? Depending on where your agency is located, how it's funded, etc., there may be certain best practices that you can't implement exactly as written below. In those instances, it's important to break down the best practice to what's at the core and ultimately determine what is possible for your agency at this time. For some, this may require implementing the Benchmarks in phases or focusing on the practice rather than the codification of the policy. To assist with this, we recommend that you review the best practice considerations that are outlined more in depth within the assessment guides that are included [above](#).



## 5. Ensure Staff Understand the Reason(s) Behind Policy Implementation

As misinformation continues to spread and scare tactics are used to discourage LGBTQ+ inclusion work, it is important that staff are not only informed of what the policy or practice is, but also why it is being implemented and how that aligns with your agency's mission and values. The deeper staff's understanding is of these factors, the more we can help ensure staff buy-in, and integration into practice, beyond the policy level.

### ACAF's Benchmarks of LGBTQ+ Inclusion are listed below.

- Building Foundation for Inclusion: **Policy and practice areas in blue bold text.**
- Solid Foundation for Inclusion: All policy and practice areas, except italicized text.
- Innovative Inclusion: *All policy and practice areas including italicized text. (Note: While multiple examples of innovations are listed in practice areas 3-7, agencies must demonstrate only one in each area to meet the Innovative Tier.*

## 1. Non-Discrimination

Establishing written policies to protect LGBTQ+ clients and employees from discrimination is an important first step in building an organization's foundation for LGBTQ+ inclusion. The non-discrimination benchmarks focus on three policies:

- a) Agency's client non-discrimination policy is inclusive of "sexual orientation," "gender identity" and "gender expression" and communicated to staff and clients.
- b) Agency's employment non-discrimination policy is inclusive of "sexual orientation" and "gender identity."
- c) Agency's contract language includes explicit LGBTQ+ non-discrimination standards.

## 2. Staff Training

LGBTQ+ staff training is a core component of an organization's efforts to create a culture that is inclusive and affirming of everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression (SOGIE). Staff training alone is not sufficient to achieve long-standing cultural change; however, when connected to policy changes, it can help give staff the skills and knowledge needed to translate policy into practice. The staff training benchmark has two components, and the specific requirements for each depend on which Tier of Recognition an agency is striving to achieve:

- a) **Agency meets minimum participation requirements for All Children - All Families Webinar Series.**
- b) Agency completes an Ongoing Training Plan detailing the ways in which LGBTQ+ topics are integrated into its ongoing staff training efforts. This plan must meet minimum training length requirements for the Innovative Tier.



### 3. Rolling Out the Welcome Mat

“Rolling out the welcome mat” for LGBTQ+ children, youth, and families means moving an organization beyond non-discrimination and taking concrete action to send an explicitly welcoming message. These benchmarks focus on LGBTQ+ inclusion in agency forms and other paperwork, visual cues within the agency, and external messaging (such as on websites, brochures, and social media).

All agency-controlled forms and internal documents use LGBTQ+ inclusive language, including:

- a) Agency forms use gender-neutral language (e.g., “Parent 1” and “Parent 2” rather than “Mother” and “Father”) where applicable.**
- b) Agency forms provide the opportunity to indicate a gender other than “Male” or “Female.”
- c) Agency forms provide the opportunity to indicate a preferred/ chosen name that is different than a person’s legal name.
- d) *Agency forms provide the opportunity to indicate the pronouns (e.g., she/her, he/him, they/them) by which a person would like to be addressed.*
- e) *Agency demonstrates other innovation in LGBTQ+ inclusion in forms and paperwork.*

Agency consistently communicates its commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusion externally, including:

- f) Agency displays visual cues throughout common areas to communicate support and inclusion of LGBTQ+ clients and their families.**
- g) Agency’s external communications (website, printed materials, etc.) explicitly and consistently reflect its commitment to working with and welcoming LGBTQ+ clients and their families.
- h) *Agency uses social media to communicate its commitment to working with and welcoming LGBTQ+ clients and their families.*
- i) *Agency demonstrates other innovation in its LGBTQ+ inclusive external communications.*

### 4. Parent Best Practices

Organizations that serve foster parents, adoptive parents, kinship caregivers and other caring adults should review key practices to ensure that LGBTQ+ adults are welcomed and included. These benchmarks focus on practice areas such as LGBTQ+ parent recruitment efforts, LGBTQ+ inclusion in parent trainings and conducting affirming homestudies with LGBTQ+ applicants.

- a) Agency targets LGBTQ+ resource parents in recruitment efforts (e.g., using ads featuring same-sex couples or trans parents, attending LGBTQ+ events, partnering with LGBTQ+ community groups, and engaging current LGBTQ+ resource families as ambassadors).
- b) Agency ensures LGBTQ+ parents feel included in parent trainings (e.g., trainers are prepared to deliver LGBTQ+ related content and skilled in creating an inclusive space for LGBTQ+ parents).
- c) Agency’s parent trainings provide information on creating a safe and affirming environment for LGBTQ+ youth (e.g., agency LGBTQ+ youth policy, research on LGBTQ+ youth in care, affirming caregiver behaviors).
- d) Agency provides LGBTQ+ inclusive ongoing support and education to existing resource parents and other caregivers.
- e) Agency provides staff with guidance on conducting LGBTQ+ affirming homestudies and assessments.





f) Agency tracks data on the number of LGBTQ+ resource parents served (e.g., information on the number of LGBTQ+ parents licensed and number of placements in LGBTQ+ headed homes).

g) Agency identifies and utilizes a list of LGBTQ+ competent referrals for outside services for LGBTQ+ families, parents, and caregivers.

Innovations (at least one):

*a) Agency has developed a strategic plan for its LGBTQ+ parent recruitment efforts focused on maximizing results and continual improvement*

*b) Agency has engaged LGBTQ+ parents in innovative ways (e.g., parent mentoring, advocacy efforts, etc.).*

*c) Agency demonstrates other innovative practice(s) with LGBTQ+ parents and caregivers.*

## 5. Youth Best Practices

Organizations working to improve and create affirming practices with LGBTQ+ youth need to translate this commitment into a thorough scan of the agency environment and all areas of service provision. Too often, LGBTQ+ youth face barriers due to institutional structures and policies rooted in anti-LGBTQ+ bias and/or assumptions that fail to recognize youth with diverse SOGIE. The policy and practice areas specific to youth services focus on removing the most common barriers faced by LGBTQ+ youth to ensure they are safe, affirmed, and supported to achieve permanency.

a) Agency provides youth in care with an LGBTQ+ inclusive “Bill of Rights” or similar information on their rights while in out-of-home care.

b) Agency provides staff with guidance on assessing resource parents’ capacity to provide safe and affirming homes for LGBTQ+ youth.

c) Agency provides staff with guidance on creating LGBTQ+ inclusive safety plans for youth, including considerations of the unique risk factors for youth with diverse SOGIE at all points in the placement process.

d) Agency has a policy in place to enforce trans-affirming placements in sex-separated facilities to ensure placement decisions affirm the child’s gender identity, are made based on the safety and well-being of the young person and are not based on the child’s sex assigned at birth.

e) Agency identifies and utilizes a list of LGBTQ+ competent referrals for outside services for LGBTQ+ youth.

Innovations (at least one):

*a) Agency provides staff with guidance on discussing SOGIE with young people.*

*b) Agency has a written policy in place that prohibits conversion therapy for youth in care.*

*c) Agency has implemented a gender-neutral dress code policy that ensures young people can authentically express their gender through clothing styles.*

*d) Agency has conducted a review of services to ensure that LGBTQ+ youth receive equitable services when compared to their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts.*

*e) Agency engages LGBTQ+ youth in care in its efforts to change policy and practice (e.g., youth focus groups, taskforces and youth-led initiatives).*

*f) Agency provides specialized programs/interventions for LGBTQ+ youth in care.*

*g) Agency demonstrates other innovative practice(s) with LGBTQ+ youth.*



## 6. Sustainability & Capacity Building

Transforming an organization's culture to ensure all stakeholders are welcomed and affirmed regardless of their SOGIE is hard work that can take years. Staff turnover, competing priorities and limited resources are among the many challenges that can get in the way of sustainable change. These policy and practice areas focus on the strategies that help support and build internal capacity for long-term and sustainable LGBTQ+ inclusion efforts.

- a) Agency's leadership supports LGBTQ+ inclusion efforts (e.g., leadership "buy-in" is clear through board/senior leadership communications on the importance of the work and action to hold stakeholders accountable). (Note: Participation in an Executive Briefing by at least one senior leader is required of all ACAF participants.)
- b) Agency takes a team-based approach to its LGBTQ+ inclusion efforts (e.g., forming an LGBTQ+ committee to lead policy and practice review and changes).

Innovations (at least one):

- a) Agency has an LGBTQ+ staff advocate who is identified to all staff and clients and is charged with resource collection and dissemination, advocacy, support and intervention specifically for LGBTQ+ clients.*
- b) Agency builds relationships with and engages local LGBTQ+ experts in its LGBTQ+ inclusion efforts.*
- c) Agency has formalized its process for SOGIE data collection from youth and/or adult clients, including the collection, tracking and analysis of the data for quality improvement work.*
- d) Agency conducts LGBTQ+ specific client feedback surveys to measure the impact of its LGBTQ+ inclusion efforts on the experiences of children, youth and families served.*
- e) Agency conducts LGBTQ+ specific staff surveys to measure current agency climate and the knowledge, skills and attitudes related to LGBTQ+ inclusion.*
- f) Agency has developed LGBTQ+ expertise among its internal staff trainers through a training of trainers or other effort.*
- g) Agency has implemented policies and benefits to recruit and retain LGBTQ+ employees (e.g., inclusive health insurance benefits, gender transition guidelines, and targeted staff hiring and recruitment efforts).*
- h) Agency demonstrates other innovative practice(s) to ensure LGBTQ+ inclusion efforts are sustainable.*

## 7. Leadership & Innovation

Organizations that have established a solid foundation for LGBTQ+ inclusion within their own walls can lead the broader child welfare community forward in this area by sharing their lessons learned. This practice area focuses on the ways in which agencies can serve as leaders on the local, state, and national levels.

- a) Agency serves as a leader in LGBTQ+ inclusive practices among its partner agencies (e.g., organizing trainings or events, leading an LGBTQ+ task force, etc.).*
- b) Agency has participated in LGBTQ+ related public education events (e.g., panel discussion at a university, radio or television appearances, etc.).*
- c) Agency has engaged in pro-LGBTQ+ public policy advocacy (e.g., submitting written or oral testimony related to legislation, writing an op-ed, participating in a lobby day, etc.).*
- d) Agency demonstrates other innovative forms of leadership.*

## APPENDIX A: BREAKING DOWN THE 3 TIERS OF RECOGNITION

All Children - All Families (ACAF) participating agencies are recognized in one of three Tiers of Recognition, depending on the extent to which they have implemented the ACAF Benchmarks of LGBTQ+ Inclusion.

### Building Foundation for Inclusion

At this level, agencies are often at the early stages of inclusive policy and practice implementation. Benchmarks focus on establishing non-discrimination protections, providing staff with online learning related to LGBTQ+ topics and improving LGBTQ+ inclusion in forms, paperwork and messaging. This tier's requirements are meaningful and achievable for agencies beginning their work on LGBTQ+ inclusion. Organizations that earn the Building Tier receive the "We support LGBTQ+ youth and families" digital image.



### Solid Foundation for Inclusion

At this level, agencies have implemented the essential elements of LGBTQ+ inclusion in policies and affirming practices. Benchmarks go beyond basic non-discrimination protections to the policies and practices necessary to actively "roll out the welcome mat" to the LGBTQ+ community. These agencies have also assessed their practices specific to youth and parents to ensure LGBTQ+ inclusion and acted to make these efforts sustainable for the long-term. Organizations that achieve the Solid Foundation for Inclusion Tier receive the "You Are Welcome Here" Seal of Recognition.



### Innovative Inclusion

At this level, agencies are pushing themselves beyond the solid foundation they have built and implementing innovative approaches to LGBTQ+ inclusion in each of the seven key policy and practice areas. Benchmarks at this level also require agencies to demonstrate leadership in areas like policy advocacy or organizational partnerships. Organizations that achieve the Innovative Inclusion Tier receive the "Innovator" Seal of Recognition.







All Children - All Families (ACAF) participating agencies are recognized in one of three Tiers of Recognition, depending on the extent to which they have implemented the ACAF Benchmarks of LGBTQ+ Inclusion. The benchmark requirements for each Tier of Recognition are outlined in the table below.

Building Foundation for Inclusion	Solid Foundation for Inclusion	Innovative Inclusion
To achieve this level of recognition, core benchmarks must be in place for policy and practice areas 1-3.	To achieve this level of recognition, all benchmarks must be in place for policy and practice areas 1-6.	To achieve this level of recognition, all benchmarks must be in place for policy and practice areas 1-6. In addition, agencies must demonstrate at least one example of innovation in policy and practice areas 2-7.
1. Non-Discrimination	1. Non-Discrimination	1. Non-Discrimination
2. Staff Training	2. Staff Training	2. Staff Training
3. Rolling Out the Welcome Mat	3. Rolling Out the Welcome Mat	3. Rolling Out the Welcome Mat
	4. Parent / CASA / Exchange Best Practices	4. Parent / CASA / Exchange Best Practices
	5. Youth Best Practices	5. Youth Best Practices
	6. Sustainability & Capacity Building	6. Sustainability & Capacity Building
		7. Leadership & Innovation



## APPENDIX B: ORGANIZATION TYPES

There are three main types of organizations that are eligible for ACAF participation. To understand more about each type's scope of work, see the explanations below:

### Private & Public - Child Welfare

The child welfare agencies featured in this report provide a diverse scope of services centered on ensuring the safety, permanency, and well-being for children and youth, and providing families with the necessary support to expand their families or care for their children successfully. The scope of services can range from foster care matching and placement, to infant adoption.

### Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs)

A substantial number of the organizations supporting Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) are featured in this report. CASAs are volunteers that advocate for the best-interests of children and youth who have experienced abuse or neglect. If you're interested in becoming a CASA volunteer, contact your local CASA organization.

### Adoption Exchanges

An organization that disseminates information on the children and youth available for adoption and in need of an adoptive or foster home.

Below you will find a breakdown of organization types for the participating organizations in the 2024-2025 Engagement Cycle:

