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Child Advocates Recognized for Commitment to Supporting LGBTQ Youth
Agency to Receive "Seal of Recognition" for Leadership in Supporting and Serving LGBTQ Youth

Milpitas, CA – June 5, 2017 – Child Advocates of Silicon Valley will be honored by the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Foundation for earning the All Children – All Families seal of recognition for its commitment to supporting and serving LGBTQ foster youth. **The presentation will take place Friday, June 9th at 3:30 pm at the Santa Clara County Family Justice Center, in Supervising Judge Shawna Schwarz's courtroom, 201 North First Street, San Jose.**

The HRC Foundation is the educational arm of the nation's largest lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender civil rights organization. All Children – All Families, a project of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, provides a framework for agencies to achieve safety, permanency and well-being by improving their practice with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer youth and families. Child Advocates earned the seal of recognition by meeting the project's ten key Benchmarks of LGBTQ Cultural Competency.

"We are honored to be recognized as a leader in serving LGBTQ foster youth, especially at a time when LGBTQ youth are over-represented in the foster care system," says Karen Scussel, executive director of Child Advocates of Silicon Valley. "This seal of recognition is testament to the humanity and dedication of our board, staff and volunteers and reflects our agency's vision to unite expertise with compassion and cultural competency to achieve the goal of safety, permanency and well-being for the LGBTQ youth we serve."

"We are thrilled to welcome Child Advocates of Silicon Valley into the community of child welfare organizations that are truly committed to supporting and serving the LGBTQ youth in their care," says Ellen Kahn, director of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Children, Youth & Families Program. "The child welfare professionals at Child Advocates are shining examples of how to prioritize efforts to improve practice with LGBTQ youth."

Certification Highlights

Child Advocates of Silicon Valley earned the seal of recognition by meeting All Children – All Families' criteria for fully-inclusive policies and practices in working with the LGBTQ community. Participating agencies work to meet ten key Benchmarks of LGBTQ Cultural Competency – from client non-discrimination policies and inclusive agency paperwork, to staff training and creating an LGBTQ-inclusive agency environment that welcomes, supports and affirms LGBTQ youth. This seal can be used to enhance an agency's outreach and recruitment within the LGBTQ community.

Why All Children - All Families?

A disproportionately high number of LGBTQ youth are in foster care, many having been rejected by their families due to their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. These



youth continue to struggle as they enter the child welfare system, where agency staff members often lack the skills and knowledge to provide them with the services they need and deserve.

- LGBTQ youth are **over-represented in foster care**, many having been rejected from their families of origin because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.
- LGBTQ youth in foster care experience bias and discrimination from peers and service providers. One study of LGBTQ youth experiences in group homes in NYC found **100% of LGBTQ youth experienced verbal harassment based on their LGBTQ status**.

“For the LGBTQ foster youth who have experienced physical, emotional or sexual abuse, the supportive role of the CASA volunteer is crucial to that child’s mental health and well-being,” says Scussel. “CASAs can provide a safe, non-judgmental environment for LGBTQ children to express their thoughts and feelings about what they’re going through. Just having a non-biased, caring adult for children who identify is huge.”

Child Advocates is actively recruiting volunteers for its July training class. Individuals interested in becoming a CASA volunteer can learn more at www.BeMyAdvocate.org/Volunteer.

About Child Advocates of Silicon Valley

Child Advocates is the only agency in Santa Clara County that provides Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) to foster youth. Because our volunteers are court-appointed, they can thoroughly explore every aspect of a child’s case, including meeting teachers, doctors, social workers, counselors, biological family members and foster parents, thereby gaining a comprehensive perspective on what the child needs in order to thrive. CASAs assist their child in accessing needed resources, follow their school progress, and speak up for their child’s best interests in court. They maintain complete records about the case, submit reports and attend court hearings. CASA volunteers stay with their case until their child has a safe, loving home. Find out more about our CASA program at www.BeMyAdvocate.org.

About Human Rights Campaign Foundation’s All Children – All Families

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Foundation’s All Children – All Families initiative, launched in 2007, promotes policies and practices that welcome LGBTQ foster and adoptive parents. The program seeks to enhance LGBTQ cultural competence among child welfare professionals and educate LGBTQ people about opportunities to become foster or adoptive parents to waiting children. To date, ACAF has 87 participating agencies across the country, and has awarded 63 seals of recognition. The Human Rights Campaign is America’s largest civil rights organization working to achieve lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality. By inspiring and engaging all Americans, HRC strives to end discrimination against LGBTQ citizens and realize a nation that achieves fundamental fairness and equality for all. More information can be found at www.hrc.org/acaf.