

## 8 Key Areas of Support

*Child Advocates of Silicon Valley have identified 8 key areas that CASAs focus on that support healthy development in youth. Research shows that when youth are nurtured in the following areas, they can experience higher self-esteem, better development of life skills, leadership skills, fewer psychosocial problems, decreased risk behaviors, better relationships, and greater academic success. We encourage you to continue exploring these areas during visits with your youth. We tried to provide you with an age range of examples as a guide.*

<b>Key Area</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Why is this area important?</b>	<b>How can you support?</b>
<b>Self-Esteem Building</b>	Advocate supports youth in feeling loved, accepted & important.	Having a positive sense of self-worth promotes good choices w/ your mind & body. You value your safety, your feelings & your health.	Give positive affirmations, recognize big & small successes, notice strengths, express confidence & high expectations, value their opinion, etc.
<b>Trust &amp; Relationship Building</b>	Advocate displays & promotes positive social relationships, emotional maturity & healthy communication.	People who've been hurt & traumatized enter new relationships expecting hurt, betrayal & victimization. 80% of 15-year olds feel they don't have enough positive relationships w/ adults.	Be consistent w/ commitments, role model healthy coping skills, listen, celebrate special milestones, recognize small successes, tell them you care, etc.
<b>Cultural &amp; Community Events</b>	Advocate engages youth in community experiences that enhance social, personal, community & cultural awareness.	These rewarding experiences help youth enhance self-identity, social & community awareness & connect youth to new interests & potential friendships.	Explore & learn together: festivals, cultural holidays, volunteering, parks, museums, historical sites, theatre, sporting events, farmers market, flea market, etc.
<b>New Experiences</b>	Advocate introduces youth to activities & events they have not yet experienced.	These rewarding experiences help youth enhance self-identity, confidence, and social & community awareness. Can connect youth to new interests & help them overcome fears & challenges.	Visit historical landmarks, museums, parks, beach, zoo, SF; try new food & sit-down restaurants, explore new hobbies, run/walk a 5k, attend a sporting event or concert, ride BART, rock climb, etc.
<b>Education Support</b>	Advocate engages in activities that supports & encourages youth's educational success.	Trauma & transitions can negatively impact academic progress. 75% of foster youth are behind one grade level; 83% are held back by the 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade; 50% obtain a HS diploma or GED; and, 2% obtain bachelor's degree or higher.	Read w/ your child, help w/ schoolwork, attend school events & meetings, visit library or college campus, communicate w/ school staff, play learning games, help w/ financial aid (FASFA), goal planning, etc.
<b>Extracurricular Activities</b>	Advocate gets youth connected or involved in extracurricular activities and supports their ongoing participation.	These rewarding experiences help youth develop new talents, confidence, self-identity & social skills. They also provide a safe place for youth to be after school w/ adult supervision.	After-school recreation program, clubs, library activities & story time, student government, Gymboree, sport teams, summer camp, volunteering, exposure to creative arts, music lessons, drama, arts & crafts, etc.
<b>Healthy Choices &amp; Behaviors</b>	Advocate engages youth in healthy eating & physical activity and encourages healthy lifestyles.	Research shows a positive connection between healthy choices (eating, physical exercise & relationships) and academic success, emotional/physical health & alertness. Physically fit children generally have better memory, concentration and energy levels.	Role model/talk about healthy choices & behavior, walk/hike/bike, eat healthy food, exercise, outdoor play, take stairs instead of elevator, drink water instead of soda, etc.
<b>Developmental Milestones/ Independent Living Skills</b>	Advocate engages youth in activities that promote independence and educational, life & career success.	Trauma can affect children's ability to reach developmental milestones. Up to 50% of former foster youth become homeless w/in 1 <sup>st</sup> 18 months of emancipation & < 50% are employed 2.5-4 years after leaving foster care.	Teach how to tie shoes, hold a pencil, ride a bike, keyboarding, say "please" & "thank you", use public transit, articulate wants & needs, find a job; discuss/role model financial literacy, explore career paths, etc.