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## **Walden Family Services Recognized by Human Rights Campaign Foundation for LGBTQ-Inclusion Efforts**

**San Diego, California** — Today, a nationally-recognized foster care, adoption, and youth services agency, proudly announced that it is being recognized in [\*Change-Makers in Child Welfare 2020\*](#) —a report highlighting the HRC Foundation’s All Children-All Families (ACAF) program’s partnership with 100 organizations across the country working to improve the services they provide to the LGBTQ community, including children in foster care and prospective foster and adoptive parents. These organizations serve more than 600,000 clients annually in 28 states and employ more than 15,000 workers.

“We are deeply honored to be the recipients of the Innovator Seal of Recognition acknowledging our programs and policies of LGBTQ inclusion,” said **Teresa Stivers, Walden Family Services CEO**. “We will continue to encourage and educate our staff, resource families, and community partners to understand and serve the needs of LGBTQ foster youth. All children deserve a family that respects their needs, rights and identity.”

“Today, children in foster care are facing a national crisis on top of a personal crisis. Our work to end anti-LGBTQ discrimination in child welfare is more important than ever,” said **HRC President Alphonso David**. “The organizations highlighted in this report are working with the Human Rights Campaign to ensure anti-LGBTQ bias does not get in the way of life-saving services for children and families. This work is more acute given the Trump-Pence administration's relentless attacks on LGBTQ people and other marginalized communities. We hope the stories shared in the report provide hope and inspiration to the children, as well as the policy makers pushing for progress during these challenging, unprecedented times.”

The agencies featured in this report conducted an internal self-assessment, provided professional development to staff and implemented ACAF’s “Benchmarks of LGBTQ Inclusion,” which track policy and practice changes within agencies. [\*Change-Makers in Child Welfare 2020\*](#) features three “Tiers of Recognition,” which celebrate the strides agencies have made toward becoming fully LGBTQ welcoming and affirming.

- Innovative Inclusion: 39 organizations met all 25 criteria and are going beyond to innovate their services for LGBTQ youth and families
- Solid Foundation for Inclusion: 28 organizations met all 25 applicable policy and practice criteria for LGBTQ inclusion
- Building Foundation for Inclusion: 27 organizations met foundational criteria, including non-discrimination protections

The report also features profiles of child welfare organizations that are setting the bar for LGBTQ inclusion, including: Amara of Seattle; Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health - Arizona; FosterAdopt Connect of Missouri and Kansas; and the Jewish Family and Children's Service of Greater Philadelphia (JFCS). The report also features interviews with LGBTQ parents served by recognized organizations, including Robyn Barbee in Kansas City, Missouri and Brent Blair in Los Angeles, California.

The release comes during National Foster Care Month -- a month aimed at raising awareness of the needs of children and youth in foster care across the U.S. -- and a time when many are sounding the alarm about the particular risks foster youth face due to [COVID-19](#). LGBTQ-inclusion work in foster care systems could not be more important. LGBTQ youth are overrepresented in foster care and face increased risk of both negative experiences and outcomes:

- Up to 30% of youth in foster care are LGBTQ;
- LGBTQ youth are twice as likely to report being treated poorly as their non-LGBTQ peers while in care;
- LGBTQ youth have a greater average number of placements than their non-LGBTQ peers;
- LGBTQ youth are more likely than their non-LGBTQ peers to be placed in congregate care, including group homes.

Since 2007, hundreds of child welfare agencies across the U.S. have used ACAF's resources to enhance their efforts to achieve safety, permanency and well-being for LGBTQ youth and families. Read the full report [here](#).

*The Human Rights Campaign Foundation is the educational arm of America's largest civil rights organization working to achieve equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual transgender and queer people. HRC envisions a world where LGBTQ people are embraced as full members of society at home, at work and in every community.*

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