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**Colorado Division of Child Welfare awarded prestigious recognition for LGBTQ+ inclusion
by the Human Rights Campaign**

DENVER (Jan. 8, 2024) – The Human Rights Campaign Foundation has once again awarded the Colorado Department of Human Services’ Division of Child Welfare with its prestigious Innovator Seal of Recognition, which recognizes the division’s leadership on LGBTQ+ inclusion. This is the third time since 2019 that the division has earned the recognition.

The recognition was announced in the HRC Foundation’s All Children-All Families [2023 Change-Makers Report](#), which highlights efforts to make services more inclusive for the LGBTQ+ community, including children and youth in foster care and prospective foster and adoptive parents.

“Our teams have worked diligently over the past five years to implement innovative approaches to LGBTQ+ inclusion in key policy and practice areas to help LGBTQ+ youth and families thrive,” said Mollie Bradlee, interim director of the Office of Children, Youth and Families, which oversees the Division of Child Welfare. **“Working with the Human Rights Campaign is one of several ways our department is dedicated to making policy and practice changes to improve the lives of some of our most at-risk and marginalized children, youth and families.”**

The agencies featured in HRC’s report provided professional development to staff and implemented ACAF’s benchmarks of LGBTQ+ inclusion, which track policy and practice changes within agencies. Agencies can receive one of three tiers of recognition, which celebrate the strides the agencies have made toward becoming fully LGBTQ+ welcoming and affirming.

Along with CDHS’ Division of Child Welfare, the Adams County Department of Human Services and Adoption Options also received the Innovator Seal of Recognition – the highest tier of recognition – placing them among the nation’s top child welfare organizations for LGBTQ+ inclusion. Another Colorado Department of Human Services program, the Colorado Sexual



Health Initiative (CoSHI), was recognized in the ACAF report for taking strides in its LGBTQ+ inclusion journey.

“Adams County has been an innovator in LGBTQ+ inclusion since 2017. We are proud to be the first Colorado county to receive the ACAF seal of recognition and set our goal high at achieving the Innovator Seal in our first year,” said the Adams County ACAF Committee. **“We aim to recruit and certify LGBTQ+ affirming foster homes while ensuring our policies and practices align with the affirmation we support in our families. We display our ACAF seals in all our recruitment materials to ensure inclusivity. Adams County hosted its second annual Pride event, and also kicked off its first Winter Solstice Gayla to celebrate our LGBTQ+ community. We aim to bring inclusion and affirmation into every step of our process.”**

In 2019, 71 agencies across 23 states were featured in ACAF’s first edition of this report. Just five years later, a record-breaking 172 agencies across 43 states implemented LGBTQ+ inclusive policies and affirming practices. These agencies employ over 30,500 professionals and serve more than 1.4 million children, youth and families annually.

The 10 Colorado organizations that received one of the three tiers of recognition in the Change-Makers Report are listed below:

Innovative Inclusion:

- Adams County Department of Human Services’ Children & Family Services Division – Westminster
- Adoption Options – Denver
- Colorado Office of Children, Youth and Families’ Child Welfare Division – Denver

Solid Foundation for Inclusion

- Raise the Future – Denver

Building Foundation for Inclusion

- CASA of Adams and Broomfield Counties – Westminster
- CASA of Jefferson and Gilpin Counties – Golden
- CASA of the Continental Divide – Dillon
- Arapahoe County Department of Human Services’ Child and Adult Protection Services – Aurora



- Jefferson County Human Services' Division of Children, Youth, Families, and Adult Protection – Golden
- Larimer County Children, Youth and Family Services' Foster and Kinship Programs – Fort Collins

Learn more about what CDHS is doing to promote inclusion for LGBTQ+ Coloradans:

- This episode of CO4Kids Live discusses [the need for affirming families for LGBTQ youth](#).
- Colorado's [co4kids.org](#) website hosts a section called [Foster Pride](#), which contains resources for the LGBTQ+ community as it relates to foster care and adoption.
- The website also includes [resources](#) for parents and child welfare professionals to affirm young people who identify as LGBTQ+ and support parents and caregivers who are LGBTQ+.
- Meet inspiring LGBTQ+ foster families and adoptive families:
 - [Meet Manuel](#)
 - [Meet Charles and Sean](#)
 - [Meet Rita and Sharita](#)

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.

The Division of Child Welfare primarily focuses on the needs of Colorado's at-risk, abused and neglected children and youth and their families. Colorado's child welfare system is supervised by the state and administered by Colorado's 64 counties. The Division of Child Welfare oversees child welfare practice, provides policy direction, and provides 80% of the funding for services.

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