

## **R.I.T.E.S FAQ SHEET**

Thank you for your interest in our R.I.T.E.S. program!

### **What is R.I.T.E.S.?**

R.I.T.E.S. is a culturally-specific, identity development intervention group that develops the critical consciousness of Black/African-Canadian youth by building pro-social skills and equipping youth with an understanding of themselves, their identity and other cultures within continental Africa as well as the Diaspora. The group aims to create space to discuss their awareness and experiences of systemic oppression and its impact on their mental well-being. The group serves to develop effective coping strategies by using an Africentric lens, incorporating evidence and research on Anti-Black racism, stress management and mental health and wellness. It serves youth between the ages of 14-17 for a period of 14 weeks.

### **Why was R.I.T.E.S. created?**

Central Toronto Youth Services (CTYS) wanted to create a supportive affirming space for youth to discuss the impact of systemic racism and oppression on their daily lives. Our aim is to expose youth to examples of Black Excellence throughout the continent and the diaspora that are absent in mainstream systems. We also aim to build a sense of community that inspires youth to speak out through developing a critical lens. This builds and fosters resilience and their ability to take action in challenging racism and systemic oppression which in turn creates change. The program instills pride and youth are able to develop a stronger sense of self and their identity as it relates to their community and society at large.

### **What kind of things will happen in the group?**

The first few weeks are focused on team building and group cohesion. Most of the group sessions incorporate a variety of activities such as warm ups, group exercises, discussions and some art-based work.

### **Who is this group for?**

This group is for youth (between 14 and 17) who identify as Black/African-Canadian inclusive of but not limited to West Africa, Central Africa, East Africa, South Africa, North Africa, Somali, the Caribbean and youth who identify as bi-racial.

### **When does the group meet?**

The sessions run on different days depending on the location. Our in-house group takes place on Monday evenings from 4pm to 6pm. The location of this in-house group is: 65 Wellesley Street East Suite 300, Toronto Ontario M4Y 1G7. We also offer groups in two schools, George Harvey Collegiate Institute and

Thistletown Collegiate Institute. The details of when these groups run are listed below:

- George Harvey Collegiate- Wednesday evenings from 3:30pm-5:30pm
- Thistletown Collegiate Thursday evening from 3:30pm-5:30pm

Youth can contact their school Social Worker and/ or Child and Youth Worker to obtain more information about the program or to obtain a referral package.

**Is the group a “drop in” group or “closed” group?**

Each group is open for the first three weeks. Once this time period has passed, we will close the group to any new members. Young people are asked to commit to the 14 weeks of group however, we know life happens! We ask that group members show up on time and stay for the entire session where possible. Please note there is a registration process to sign up for the R.I.T.E.S. group.

**What is the Referral/ Intake Process?**

1. Step 1: Complete the referral information form with the interested young person (form attached).
2. Step 2: Contact Vanessa Lackraj at 416.924.2100 ext. 246 or [vanessa.lackraj@ctys.org](mailto:vanessa.lackraj@ctys.org) . The referral information form can be sent via e-mail or via fax at 416-924-2930. Please make it to the attention of Vanessa Lackraj.
3. Step 3: Staff will follow-up with the young person to set up a ½ hour intake appointment either at CTYS or in the community.  
After completing this intake, youth will be asked to provide consent to engaging in this service. They will also receive a CTYS information package.
4. Step 4: Come to our first group on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018!

**Who is offering this group?**

CTYS is an innovative and accredited Children’s Mental Health Agency in Toronto. The R.I.T.E.S. team consists of three professionals who are part of the Black/African-Canadian community.

**Does it cost and will there be food and TTC Fare?**

This group is free! Food and TTC tickets are provided each session.

**Where is CTYS?**

CTYS is located at 65 Wellesley Street East, Suite 300. This is on the South/West corner of Church Street and Wellesley Street East. Go in the entrance door on Wellesley Street East and take the elevator to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. If traveling by the TTC, the closest subway station is Wellesley Station. Exit the Station, turn left and walk one block East on Wellesley Street to the address.

If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact:

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