



EMPOWERING YOUTH
CHANGING LIVES

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

Thank you for your interest in the R.I.T.E.S. Program at Central Toronto Youth Services (CTYS)!

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

R.I.T.E.S. stands for Resilience, Identity, Transformation, Empowerment and Self-Determination. The R.I.T.E.S. Program is a culturally specific, identity development initiative that supports the empowerment of Black, African-Canadian, Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Latinx youth between the ages of 13 and 17, who have African heritage. The group aims to create a brave space to discuss awareness and experiences of systemic oppression and its impact on mental well-being. The group serves to develop effective coping strategies using an Africentric lens by incorporating evidence-based research on Anti-Black racism, stress management, mental health and wellness.

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

Central Toronto Youth Services wanted to create a supportive and affirming space for youth to discuss the impact of systemic racism and oppression in their daily lives. The aim is to expose them to examples of Black Excellence from the African continent and the Diaspora that are absent in mainstream systems such as the education sector. In the R.I.T.E.S. program, we come together to explore what it means to be Black in today's context. We commit to providing a space where youth feel empowered to challenge racism and the systemic barriers they face. We strive to build a sense of community that inspires youth to speak out while developing a critical lens. This helps foster resiliency and supports the young person to take action to build the future they want for themselves.

What kind of things will happen in the group?

The weekly sessions work towards building group cohesion by incorporating a variety of activities such as: discussions using culturally relevant materials, group exercises, mindfulness techniques and art-based activities.

Who is this group for?

This group is for youth who identify as Black of African descent: African, Afro-Canadian, Afro-Caribbean and/or Afro-Latinx (for example: Jamaican, Ghanaian, Somali, Trinidadian, Scotian, Columbian, etc.) with different levels of intersectionality.

When does the group meet?

The group will meet in person at various dedicated program locations throughout the city. Each group runs for 12 weeks for 1 or 2 hours during lunch, during instructional time or after school - depending on the group.

Is registration ongoing?

Registration occurs during the Fall and Spring of each school year. Each group is closed which means no new members may join after week 3. Young people are asked to commit to the 12 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.

What is the Referral/Registration Process for Group Service?

Step 1: Complete the referral form with the interested young person (form attached).

Step 2: Fax completed form to the attention of R.I.T.E.S. Intake at 416-924-2100 ext. 228. If access to fax is unavailable, referral forms may be emailed to rites.intake@ctys.org.

Step 3: Staff will follow-up with the young person to set up a registration appointment. Appointments may be conducted in person or over the phone. Alternatively, registration may be completed using an on-line platform such as ZOOM or Microsoft Teams. As part of the registration process, the youth will be asked to provide consent to engage in this service. They will also receive a CTYS information package. If you have any concerns or any other questions, please feel free to contact the sender of this message.

Individual Counselling

The R.I.T.E.S. Individual Counselling Program is a culturally specific counselling service that supports Black and African Canadian youth between the ages of 13 and 17.

We understand that daily exposure to racism, discrimination, homophobia, violence and poverty can lower young people's self-esteem, impact their mental health and compromise their potential for overall success. Using a strength-based and relational approach grounded in anti-oppression psychotherapy, this program supports young people to create goals and address issues such as their mental health concerns/ diagnoses, trauma, addictions, anger management, grief, and the impacts of anti-Black racism, Queer and Trans violence, and structural oppression.

How Do I Access This Counselling Service?

If you are interested, please complete a referral form and fax it to the attention of R.I.T.E.S. Intake at 416-924-2930. If you have questions or for more information, please contact: R.I.T.E.S. Intake at 416-924-2100 ext. 228 or rites.intake@ctys.org

Please note that emails may be intercepted. Email is neither secure nor confidential. Your continued use of email communication confirms that you accept this risk. If you feel that email communication is insufficient, please contact R.I.T.E.S. Program staff directly at 416-924-2100. ext 228