

**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, Afro-Canadian and Afro-Caribbean youth. 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 a safe space to discuss awareness and experiences of systemic oppression with its impact on their mental well-being. The group serves to develop effective coping strategies by using an Africentric lens by incorporating evidence-based research on Anti-Black racism, stress management and mental health and wellness. It serves youth between the ages of 13-18 for a period of 10-12 weeks (*if they are currently accessing CTYS services, they access the group up the age of 24*).

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

Central Toronto Youth Services (CTYS) 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 youth to examples of Black Excellence throughout the diaspora that are absent in mainstream systems.

In the R.I.T.E.S program, we collectively come together to talk about what it means to be Black in today’s climate. We strive and commit to providing a space where youth feel empowered, where they can challenge racism and the systemic barriers they face, and to create more visibility and representation of the Black excellence that surrounds us. We strive to build a sense of community that inspires youth to speak out while developing a critical lens. This helps to build and foster resiliency and supports the young person to take action in challenging racism and systemic oppression, while building the future they want for themselves.

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

Given the COVID-19 pandemic, the agency has moved all groups to virtual platforms until further notice. All young people will go through the agency’s assessment to assess the readiness for accessing online portals. The first few weeks are focused on team building and group cohesion. Most of the online group sessions incorporate a variety of activities such as culturally appropriate materials, group exercises, mindfulness, discussions and art-based work.

**Who is this virtual group for?**

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

**When does the virtual group meet?**

Until further notice all group will be running online using Zoom or Microsoft Teams. The group sessions will be determined two weeks before the groups begin online. The RITES group will be running more than one session and the young in each group will be informed on what date, time and platform they will be using two weeks prior to the group starting. Community virtual groups will start on **Thursday November 19th, 2020** until **Thursday February 18th, 2021** at **4:00 pm to 5:30 pm**.

**Is the virtual 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 new members. Young people are asked to commit to the 10 to12weeks 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 form with the interested young person (form attached).
2. Step 2: Contact Kevin Rambally at 416.989.1756 kevin.rambally@ctys.org or Naomi Martey at 416.731.0224 or naomi.martey@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 Kevin Rambally or Naomi Martey.
3. Step 3: Staff will follow-up with the young person to set up an hour intake appointment using a zoom platform or over the phone. As part of the intake process, the 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 (see flyer for current dates).

**Where is CTYS?**

CTYS is located at 65 Wellesley Street East, Suite 300. The building 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 3rd 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. As of now, we are not doing any in person intakes unless the young person has barriers to accessing services online. This will be done on a case by case basis and if you have any concerns, any other questions please feel free to contact:

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