



A YOUTH FITNESS & LEADERSHIP PROGRAM WHERE



THE GAME  
IS OUR  
LIFESTYLE

FEATURING THE  
RITES OF PASSAGE  
SUPPORT PROGRAM  
FOUNDED ON BEHALF  
OF DISADVANTAGED  
FOSTER CARE YOUTH

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TRITON  
RITES OF

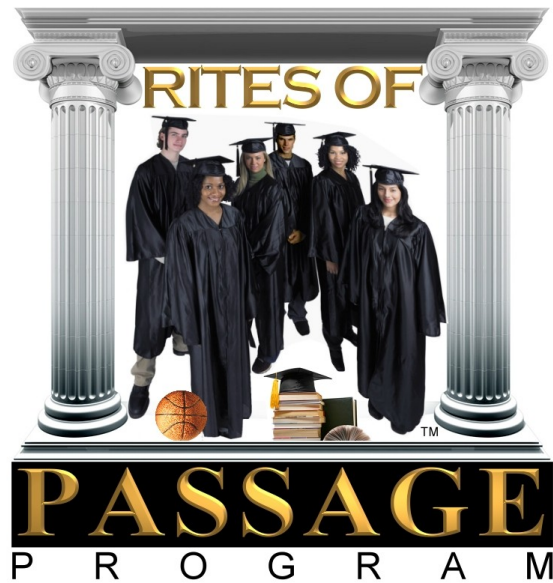


TM

PASSAGE

P R O G R A M

Preparing Foster Care Youth to Cope & Deal with Real Life Challenges & Situations



## ~Hoops-R-Us “Rites of Passage” Program~

Since our inception, Hoops-R-Us have played an active role in preparing youth that are involved in our various programs for the future by using sports as a spring board to success.

We are in partnership with the L.A. Wildcats – a non-profit, tax-exempt 501-( c)(3) Los Angeles Youth program that works with young men and women between the ages of 11 and 18 that are in the foster care system. Its founder, Derrick Cooper (President and CEO), has been working with foster care youth for over twenty years. Our main-focus is to CO-develop and expand the scope and services of our Rites of Passage Program.

### **rites of passage concept**

The concept of ‘Rites of Passage’ (ROP) has its origination in ancient Africa. Formal training and ritual process marked the transition of boys to manhood. All societies, however, have methods of preparing their boys and girls to take adult responsibility. In the United States, the family has the primary obligation. When the family is no longer available or able to perform this function, it becomes the task of the community. In Los Angeles County this is the mandate of the Department of Children and Family Services.

This history of public service “raising” children has been problematic. For many children it has resulted in numerous placements in different homes, extended time in foster care, and ultimately referrals to Probation and/or law enforcements as they “age-out” of foster care. Various studies on children leaving foster care has documented that 66% leave foster care without a high school diploma, 34% go on welfare, and 25% end up on the streets. The ROP Program was developed to build self-esteem in children and to improve the chances of youth living in foster care.

The ROP Program was originally designed by NFLEC (National Family Life and Education Center) to assist teenage fathers in becoming men, thus enabling them to father a child. This program has been expanded to assist both boys and girls living in out-of-home care into becoming responsible, productive, and healthy adults. The goal of the ROP Program is to prepare youth in out-of-home care to meet the challenges presented to them upon emancipation. Improving the chances of living a productive and satisfying life depends on many factors; but begins with a degree of self-esteem. ROP is a program in which boys and girls from the ages of 14 to 18 learn the ten-step rites of passage consisting of spiritual, emotional, social, personal, mental, cultural, historical, political, economic, and physical components; all of which lead to

more positive interaction with the world. The youth that participate in ROP are exposed to education workshops, field trips, team sports, skill development training, violence prevention methods, martial arts, dance, tutoring, and study groups. ROP teaches concepts which are fundamental to the process of passage from childhood to adulthood. They learn to identify feelings in order to manage them, develop positive methods of resolving conflict, sharpen study skills, and communicate effectively.

The ROP is a program for adolescents who are living in long term foster care with relatives or other caregivers (foster homes, small family homes, and group homes). All youth enrolled in the program may remain under the supervision of the child welfare system, Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), until 18 years of age. Youth targeted for this program reside in DCFS Regions II and VI and are receiving PP services. Youth enroll in the program voluntarily and continue to participate for a minimum ten months to completion. A stipend is available to all participants.

## **PROGRAM GOALS**

The DCFS Rites of Passage program has as its goals:

- Early intervention in the foster child's growth and development
- Raise the level of self-esteem, create positive values and empower children in foster care
- Assist boys in becoming men and girls in becoming women
- Prepare youth to meet the challenges presented to them upon emancipation
- Assist youth in becoming responsible, productive, and healthy adults
- Aid students in obtaining entrance into college
- Assist youth in obtaining job skills

## **COMMUNITY COLLABORATION**

To meet its goals, HOOPS R US and the L.A. Wild Cats have contracted with the National Family Life and Education Center (NFLEC), a community based agency, to provide the ROP "Rites Module". Primary components of the project available to each youth include case management by DCFS CSW, individual/group counseling, drama classes, mentors educational assessments, homework clubs, martial art/yoga, drums/dance, educational field trips, tutoring, and introduction to value based concepts in a ten month program. The "Rites Module" involves identifying, feeling, and learning the difference between responses & reactions, handling personal & family problems, nutrition, health, etc.

The Rites include:

**Personal** – Explore how life can seem hard and unfair, but our ability to love, struggle, and overcome obstacles is ever present. Present concrete alternatives for overcoming.

**Social** – Identify negative affiliations with the context of the world, community, and families. They should benefit (not suffer) from their presence.

**Economics** – Explores concrete steps for establishing and maintaining a sound economic foundation for students.

**Historical** – Mandates knowledge of heritage and an understanding of how the 'present' is connected to the 'past'.

**Cultural** – Develop cultural knowledge, appreciation, and inspiration.

**Spiritual** – Explore positive and productive lives within their own spiritual framework.

**Emotional** – Identify feelings & reactions and reinforce emotional honesty with self and others.

**Mental** – Utilize each student’s interest and goals to inspire a thirst for learning. Identify special educational needs.

**Physical** – Requires knowledge of the connection of hygiene, health, and physical activity to the quality of life.

**Political** – Requires a field assignment in order to enhance responsibility of self-determination.

In this collaboration, each of the children’s social workers (CSWs) assigned to the ROP are primary case workers for up to 27 youths. Additionally, the CSWs provide frequent visits to the participating youth assigned to the caseload. This case planning process is designed to ensure that each ROP youth, their caregiver, and the CSW begin early planning for transition to the DCFS independent living program and successful emancipation from foster care into adulthood. Upon transfer of cases from the Regional CSW to the Rites of Passage Program, all case management responsibilities are assumed by the ROP CSWs.

- Successful emancipation of those eligible = 75%
  - This includes students who graduated high school or obtained a high school diploma or equivalency certificate (GED). These students either entered college, trade school, or employment.
  - Of those who successfully emancipated, 41% are enrolled in a two or four year college program.

The ROP program was honored as the recipient of the 1994 Achievement Award, presented by the National Association of Counties.

## **ELIGIBILITY**

ROP is a program for adolescents who are living in long term care with relatives or other caregivers (foster homes, small family homes, and group homes). All youth enrolled in the program may remain under the supervision of the child welfare system DCFS until 18 years of age. Youth targeted for this program reside in the Los Angeles County area. Youth enrolled in the program volunteer and participate for a minimum of ten months to completion. A stipend may be available to active participants.

Our volunteer staff is encouraged to seek out the services of the Rites of Passage Program for appropriate youth in out-of-home care. Youth should be 14 years of age (or older), in stable placement, and without a history of chronic AWOLs (absent without leave).

## **CONTRACT AGREEMENT**

Our contract with the L.A. Wild Cats requires us to fulfill the following duties:

- Service 250 adolescents in a twelve month period
  - These youth should be identified and referred to the Rites of Passage Program
- All students must be assessed via academic, family background, knowledge & skills, life goals, values, and psycho-social status

- All of these assessments are currently completed in the Personal Rites of Passage except the academic skills assessment
- We must conduct a minimum of twenty four (24) two-hour workshops in a 12 month period
  - Workshops are designed to enable participants to succeed in school
  - The contract implies that the contractor provide two two-hour workshops each month
- We should encourage school representatives to participate in workshops to establish a support network and facilitate the use of educational services offered by the school
- Contractor's staff, guest speakers, teachers, and motivational speakers facilitate workshops
- Provide one to four one-hour sessions per week for homework clubs/literacy support
  - Currently we provide two one-hour sessions per week. Students must receive tutoring
- Contractor must visit each youth's school counselor once per quarter to: 1) coordinate youth's school plan, 2) determine specific educational services for youth, and 3) determine classes required for each youth to graduate from high school
- Make home calls once per month
  - Home calls help to establish relationships with caregivers and ensure follow-through on homework assignments & educational plans
- Referrals to community resources
  - Each referral is placed into the student's file
- Conduct at least one field trip per month
  - Caregivers should be given a two week's notice prior to field trip
- HOOPS R US shall provide nutritional snacks for each youth participating in sessions

## **WORKSHOPS**

There will be a set curriculum comprised of 24 workshops. These workshops will be the same throughout all three modules. However, students may benefit from additional workshops the last Saturday of each month. Workshops will follow the following format:

1. Circle of prayer – All workshops will begin with a prayer to set the tone. All participants and staff members will be invited to join the prayer circle. Those who wish not to participate in the prayer reserve the right to do so. The prayer should address the workshop, the lives of the young people in attendance, their families, our people, and the world.
2. Ritual – There will be a different color candle for each Rite Of Passage. Participants will read a one to two sentence description of each rite before its respective candle is lit.
3. Recognition – Case Manager will recognize one or two students who did well in the previous week's workshop. Case manager will thank the youth for their participation.
4. Workshop Review – A five question multiple choice quizzes will be given to students to review the previous week's workshop.
5. Role Model – Persons from various backgrounds will be presented to participants each week.
6. Workshop for the week (50 minutes)
7. Close workshop with overview, prayer, and affirmations.

Workshops will be no more than 95 minutes. The above format will bring structure and consistency.

## **ASSESSMENT AND LITERACY**

All youth are required to be assessed upon admission into the Rites of Passage program. He/she will receive either a red, green, or black sticker on their file folder and assessment sheet. The color code is as follows:

- Black (good) – reads either ahead, on, or two years below grade level
- Red (need improvement) – reads two to four years below grade level
- Green (poor) – reads more than four years below grade level

Youth in the need improvement and poor categories will be referred immediately for literacy classes. No longer can we allow our kids to not address their literacy. As long as this problem exists, progress in school is hindered.

## **HOMEWORK/LITERACY CLUB**

Currently, we have some reading tools and have successfully run a literacy program for over seven years. We need to revive that program using volunteers from surrounding churches and/or students who need internships or community service. Until we attract outside personnel, we must use our present resources to get the homework and literacy clubs off the ground. We have recently received a large quantity of materials for literacy that will provide a good foundation for our literacy club. Also, we have tools such as “Hooked on Phonics” and the “Phonics Game”.

The Homework Club should provide a supervised area for participants to do homework. Participants needing help can ask their peers and staff for assistance. Participants who do not have homework can be assigned work through grade-level workbooks.

## **THE ACADEMIC BOWL**

The Academic Bowl is an incentive for students to perform better in school. The Academic Bowl will reward students on a point system. Students with the highest points will win a grand prize at the close of the module (i.e. tickets for the home to Magic Mountain, etc.) The Academic Bowl will be organized as follows:

- All students are made aware of the contest at workshops
- All owner operators and staff members are faxed information about the contest, the rules, and copies of progress reports for their students to take to school every Friday
- Students must bring their progress reports to workshops every week
  - If a student misses a workshop, for any reason and we don't receive his or her progress reports by the end of the week, the student will not receive points
  - Students with good attendance accumulate more points
- Following is the grade/point chart used
  - A = 10 points
  - B = 7 points
  - C = 3 points
  - D = 1 point
- A chart of scores will be posted during all workshops and will be updated weekly
- The person with the highest score at the end of the month will receive the grand prize

The academic bowl will encourage students to encourage themselves and other residents to do better in school and remember to return their progress report so they can improve their chances of receiving the grand prize. The participants that win will also receive a certificate or plaque for that year from National Family Life and Education Center – Rites of Passage Program.

## **MEN AND WOMEN’S NIGHTS**

Men and Women’s night will be held the third Wednesday of each month. On these days there will be no workshops. The boys and girls will be separated and will have discussions focused on manhood and womanhood. Very unique things can be done with these nights i.e. girls may go to a beauty salon for manicures, pedicures, or to get their hair done. These nights were very productive in the past and became a special time for the young people to discuss issues that may not arise in a workshop.

## **COLLEGE APPLICATIONS AND PREPARATION**

This portion of the Rites of Passage program will be handled by volunteer peer counselors. This will help the peer counselor to obtain information about colleges for themselves as well as for the students.

- Tenth Grade
  - Students should visit college campuses, on an organized tour, once a month
  - Students should receive information about at least three summer programs on college campuses, enroll, and attend
  - Students should attend SAT and ACT prep classes, and should take these test once during their tenth grade year
- Eleventh Grade
  - Students should visit college campuses once a month
  - Enroll in summer programs
  - SAT and ACT prep and take tests twice this year
  - Black and/or historical college tour
  - Four workshops this year regarding college, financial aid applications, and college applications (identifying referrals, etc.)
- Twelfth Grade
  - Visit campuses
  - Enroll in early college enrollment programs
  - Develop plan, back-up plan, and triple back-up plan
  - Financial Aid applications and college applications (sessions should start in August)
  - College Tours
  - SAT and ACT twice this year

All students should take place in the above listed events. Going to a college campus, or attending classes on a college campus, can help students develop a different outlook on the world and their future.

## **VOLUNTEERS**

One of the great characteristics of thriving non-profit organizations is having a strong volunteer base. We will establish a protocol with DCFS to clear volunteers to aid in the Rites of Passage program. Volunteers often bring a variety of skills, experience, and resources.