



## **Ambassadors of Compassion Leadership Program**

### *Program Overview*

#### **The Program**

The Ambassadors of Compassion (AOC) Program is a measured, interactive, coach-led, character development and youth leadership journey that equips youth with resiliency and the personal leadership skills necessary to navigate and succeed through life's inevitable challenges. Ambassadors of Compassion currently has two programs, R.I.S.E. for grades 8 and 9, and L.I.F.E. for high school. Both programs are built upon the age-old principles that every youth needs to master in order to lead a successful and fulfilling life. Ambassadors of Compassion empowers youth by equipping them to succeed as they take responsibility for their own life and serve the needs of their community.

Both the L.I.F.E. and R.I.S.E. journeys begin with a Kickoff Event and conclude with an Honor Event that recognizes those youth who have completed the journey by serving their community and taking responsibility for their own lives through measurable actions. Team meetings, led by Team Coaches, focus on Ambassadors of Compassion's leadership model, TRAIN, MEASURE, HONOR™.

There are two types of Honor Events where graduating Ambassadors of Compassion receive their diplomas - those organized by the Ambassadors of Compassion regional staff, and those organized by the individual Team Coach.

The Honor Events planned by the Ambassadors of Compassion regional staff are usually held in larger metropolitan areas where multiple Ambassadors of Compassion groups are invited to participate and be honored alongside graduating Ambassadors of Compassion from other AOC groups and typically take place at a professional or college sports venue, a concert, or other special location.

Local Honor Events are those planned by the individual Team Coach where larger regional events such as professional or college sports, concerts, etc. might not be available. The list of ways/places for these local Honor Events depends upon the contacts and creativity of the individual Team Coach. How about a special reception where the school principal or community business leader passes out the diplomas to the students? Local businesses might even consider hosting the event. You might want to have a simple reception or pizza party for the students after school to hand out the diplomas and honor each of the students. It's always fun to also invite the parents.

The AOC Journey requires every youth to participate in a group service project designed to make a difference in their community and also a personal service project.

In addition to the Kickoff and Honor Events, the program consists of twelve sessions and can be completed in fourteen to fifteen weeks, or extended over a longer period of time. It can also be compacted into a shortened timeline to accommodate a summer school or other similar schedule.

## The Journey Content

The R.I.S.E. Principles:

- R - RESPONSIBILITY** (Exploring the characteristics of a responsible person and the need to take ownership of one's thoughts and actions to help accomplish one's goals and dreams in life)
- I - INITIATIVE** (Understanding that initiative is an action step based on one's decisions that results in a multitude of lasting benefits, including strong and healthy relationships and reaching one's greatness in life)
- S - SERVICE** (Discovering the importance of serving others and also serving the needs in the community)
- E - EXPECTATIONS** (Examining the power of expectations in one's relationships and in one's goals and dream, and distinguishing and evaluating the difference between realistic and unrealistic expectations and knowing how to manage them)

**Suggested Grade Level:** Grade 8

The L.I.F.E. Principles:

- L - LABOR** (Understanding the role that labor plays in our lives, recognizing the needs of others and the needs within our community, and taking action to help)
- I - INFLUENCE** (Recognizing that we are influenced both positively and negatively by the culture and people around us, and acknowledging that we ourselves influence others)
- F - FORGIVENESS** (Discovering that forgiveness is a process, and understanding and experiencing the freedom and power that comes from forgiving others, forgiving ourselves, and also asking for forgiveness when we offend others)
- E - EXPERIENCES** (Exploring the importance of building on our life experiences and those of others, and facing and letting go of any negative experiences in order to help us reach our goals and dreams and full potential in life)

**Suggested Grade Level:** Grades 9 thru 12

## Pre and Post Resiliency Assessment

The measurement tool incorporated into Ambassadors of Compassion's TRAIN, MEASURE, HONOR™ model to assess the program's effectiveness and the growth of students is Meritcore Corporation's Resiliency Initiatives© **Youth Resiliency: Assessing Developmental Strengths Questionnaire**. This pre and post assessment provides a statistically sound and research-based approach to help understand the strengths that are related to long-term resiliency of youth. [www.resil.ca](http://www.resil.ca)

## The Student Journal

A personal Ambassadors of Compassion student Journal is provided for every student. In some cases the student journals are available online. Incorporated into the journal are weekly **Calls to Action** that have been specifically designed to help youth discover who they are, help them develop into the person they want to become, and challenge them to begin taking the actual steps necessary to start working toward achieving their goals and dreams.

In the journal the youth will record their personal thoughts, ideas, and discoveries in response to each lesson and the accompanying ***Calls to Action***.

## **The Rationale for the Ambassadors of Compassion Program**

The world today is facing great challenges as evidenced by significant economic turmoil and failing social systems. The real tragedy is the loss of great human potential that will go unrealized and therefore never benefit family, society, nations, and the world.

Ambassadors of Compassion envisions millions of youth who are productive, self-sufficient, and compassionate citizens taking responsibility for their own lives while serving the needs of their community and world.

The Ambassadors of Compassion journey helps youth define who they are, where they belong, and where they are going in life. It helps them discover their life's purpose along with providing them with a sense of hope and destiny through serving the needs of others.

## **Team Meetings**

Team meetings, led by a Team Coach who is selected by the school or organization whose youth are taking the journey, are not meant to be an intensive text-based study but an experience-based journey to encourage, empower, and equip students for a successful future. At the team meetings youth are challenged to discover the personal benefit of incorporating the weekly ***Calls to Action*** into their personal lives.

After the initial Kickoff Event, teams will generally meet once a week for an hour. AOC recognizes the importance of allowing each Team Coach to plan his/her own meeting schedule. Depending upon specific circumstances, coaches may choose to meet every week or every other week as determined by the needs and schedule of their individual group. In a school setting teams may choose to meet daily for 15 to 20 minutes during an Advisory class or Homeroom or after school. At the end of the twelve sessions, Team Coaches will schedule a short wrap-up meeting to discuss the previous week's ***Calls to Action*** and to finalize plans for the Honor Event.

Each team meeting will include a short 5-10 minute video featuring a celebrity, athlete, professional, or person from any walk of life who challenges the youth to examine their lives in relationship to the concepts presented in the student journal.

## **Team Coach Manual (Teacher Lesson Plans)**

An online Team Coach Manual is provided for each session to help coaches prepare for their team meetings. It includes a step-by-step plan for each session, along with group discussion questions and a summary of important ideas, thoughts, and concepts. In addition to the suggested group discussion questions, Team Coaches are encouraged to create their own questions based upon the needs and makeup of their individual groups.

## **Team Coach Training**

Online Team Coach training will be provided through AOC's newly designed learning management system (LMS). The training allows an individual interested in becoming a Team Coach to work through the course independently on his/her own time. The initial online training will take approximately two hours to complete. In addition, the Team Coach will need to spend time in preparation for each of the sessions before they meet with their group.

## Criterion for Selecting Participants

The criterion for selecting youth to participate in the AOC journey is their willingness to build their lives and communities. These youth will be challenged to make a difference in the lives of others around them. At the same time they will be taking positive steps toward personal growth and accountability and incorporating into their lives the principles necessary to help them reach their goals and dreams and to live a fulfilled life. The Ambassadors of Compassion journey is designed to benefit youth from all walks of life. By completing the journey students will gain personal leadership skills to enhance their life, greater confidence in their own strengths and abilities, and a new sense of purpose and belonging that will help them see new possibilities of how they can reach their goals and dreams while also making a difference in the world around them.

## Group Size / Room Set-Up

Groups should be small enough to allow for thought-provoking discussion and interaction - perhaps 10 to 12 youth per group. Each youth should be encouraged to share his/her personal thoughts, ideas, and responses to the weekly ***Calls to Action*** during the team meeting discussions. To allow for the best student discussion and interaction, it is suggested that students meet with the Team Coach in a circular formation, either around a table or by moving the desks/chairs into a circle.

## Team Coaches

A Team Coach is the adult leader who takes a group of youth through the Ambassadors of Compassion journey. Team Coaches play the key role in helping their youth understand, practice, and adapt these important concepts into their personal lives. They serve as an example. They are the team facilitator and the one who gets the weekly conversation rolling regarding the videos and ***Calls to Action***. They ask the questions and keep the conversations on track. They inspire and challenge and serve as role models. They encourage the youth to be their best and to move beyond where they were when they started the journey. They are responsible for securing a place to hold the team meetings and making sure there is reliable Internet access for the video links. The Team Coach also manages and oversees the team's group service project.

Schools and groups taking youth through the program have the responsibility to provide their own Team Coaches. The success of the program and the long-term beneficial impact upon the youth and the community revolves around the quality of the individual Team Coach. The Team Coach recruiting and selection process is therefore of utmost importance.

## Qualifications for a Team Coach

- a desire to help youth develop into successful and productive citizens
- the ability to inspire, challenge, and encourage youth
- a caring attitude
- a good listener
- a good role model
- 18 years of age or older
- the ability to relate well and be comfortable working with teens within a non-judgmental setting
- the ability to create a safe and trusting environment for youth
- the ability to comfortably keep the conversation moving without being afraid of periods of

silence

### **Responsibilities of a Team Coach**

- securing a location for the team meetings, including Internet access
- being willing to spend the necessary time in preparation for each team meeting, including viewing Team Coach training videos and reviewing the Team Coach Manual (teacher lesson plans)
- being accessible to your participating youth
- making sure youth are completing their Ambassadors of Compassion journals
- completing a brief follow-up Team Coach survey at the end of the Journey
- attending the Kickoff Event
- attending the Honor Event

### **Benefits of Being an Ambassadors of Compassion Team Coach**

- The opportunity to make a significant difference in the lives of youth in an affirming and positive environment
- The opportunity to receive training and develop coaching skills that will benefit your own life that are transferrable to personal, family, and other teaching and training environments
- The opportunity to participate in your own personal transformation as you too become an Ambassador of Compassion