

## **C.O.P.E PROGRAM INFORMATION SHEET**

### **Boy Scouts of America, Alamo Area Council, Inc.**

Project C.O.P.E. stands for “Challenging Outdoor Personal Experience”. It comprises group initiative games and low-and high-course activities. Some of the activities involve a group challenge, while others test individual skills and agility; only a few require athletic strength. Participations climb, swing, balance, jump, rappel, and think of solutions to a variety of activities. Most do much more than they thought they could.

The objectives of COPE are to develop leadership, problem solving, self-esteem, communication, trust, decision-making, and teamwork. Your team should select a few of these goals for your COPE experience. A successful COPE experience will build a strong bond among members of a team. COPE initiatives are based on non-competitive “New Games” where everyone is a winner. Setting and achieving of goals is the preferred measure of success rather than time or score. As much emphasis is placed upon the mental experience in COPE as the physical one. The outcome of most initiatives is discussed by the team to learn from the experience, to affirm positive interactions, and to evaluate the progress toward goals. The COPE program provides an opportunity for every participant to achieve success as an individual and as a member of a team.

All participants are expected to respect the experiences of others and to have a positive mental attitude throughout the activities. No one is asked to do more than he is willing to undertake, but each is challenged to do as much as he can, setting and striving toward his own goals and contributing to the team objectives.

COPE is *not* just games. Processing (guided discussion) of the experience of each element, what was learned, what could be done better, and what goals were achieved are perhaps more important than the activity. Games and low elements are usually more constructive than high elements and are not discounted. COPE is not an obstacle course or a physical skill eliminator. There are parts of COPE for almost everyone.

#### *Safety*

Safety is foremost in all COPE activities – emotional as well as physical safety. As participants encounter the various challenges on the course, they may experience a variety of fears, such as acrophobia, claustrophobia, the fear of getting hurt, or of embarrassment. Facilitators will encourage participants to examine the source and reasonableness of these fears. As well, facilitators will promote an atmosphere in which participants feel safe enough to challenge their self-imposed limitations. Thus, participants learn to respect and encounter fear in ways that allow personal growth.

Facilitators teach safety before performing each activity. Below head high, all team members will learn spotting techniques and use them to spot their teammate/climber against falls. On high course activities, the facilitator will teach belaying (a rock-climbing safety technique) to protect participants against falls. All systems have back-ups. Trained professionals regularly inspect the course and the hardware, and the facilitator checks each element before daily use. All COPE staff facilitators receive training in the physical and emotional dynamics of the activities they lead, and in the safety and emergency procedures of the course.

#### *Participants*

All participants in the full COPE program should be at least 13 years of age by January 1 of the year of participation, and, for scout unit teams, all members must be currently registered. If any team members are under 13 years of age, the team can only register for a low course experience. By special arrangement, there are graduated levels of COPE activities for participants from ages 10-½ to 13. COPE activities are for almost all adults as well. Your team should consist of at least 8 and not more than 12 members. Groups of 13-24 can be accommodated on the same day for the low course elements only and should register as two teams.

For explorer posts and other older boy programs, the COPE activities are enticing to adult leaders as well as the scouts. Although we do not prevent adults from participating with their youth on the team, leaders and COPE facilitators should closely evaluate what objectives are being sought by the experience and what

relationship exists between the youth and adults. Is adult leadership and authority at risk if the adult's fears or frailties are exposed? Can the adult participate in the group without assuming leadership or authority? In cases where adults do participate with their youth, the COPE facilitator may, in some activities, "handicap" the adults to limit his participation or encourage greater youth contribution.

Teams of all adults are encouraged, such as unit or district committees. Non-scout and corporate groups are also welcome.

### *Available Dates*

Due to a limited supply of trained facilitators, the COPE course will be offered on most weekends during the cool weather months of March, April, May, September, October, and November. Excluded during these periods are major holiday weekends, including Easter, Fiesta, Labor Day, and Thanksgiving Day, and major Scouting events such as Scout Country Fair.

### *Application*

COPE programs are scheduled by application through the Alamo Area council, BSA office at 2226 N.W. Military Highway, San Antonio, Texas 78213, phone 210-341-8611. Applications are taken on a first-come, first-served basis. Tentative reservations are taken by phone. The appropriate application form must be received and the registration fee paid no later than two weeks before the scheduled date to confirm the reservation. COPE Team Application Packages with appropriate information and forms are available from the council office.

When your application is accepted and scheduled you will receive a confirming phone call. During the two weeks before your scheduled date, a COPE facilitator will contact your adult team leader to discuss objectives and final plans.

### *Health*

All participants must be in good health and submit a signed *Project COPE Medical Information/Informed Consent* Form. These forms are supplied as apart of your COPE Team Application Package. If the scout unit has current BSA camp physical forms or the health record on the back of the individual BSA registration form, copies of these should be brought to the course on the day of the activity. For participants under 18, a parent or guardian must sign the medical form.

### *Dress*

Dress appropriately for the season and for physical activity – loose fitting long pants (except in the hottest weather) and long or short sleeved shirts. Dress in removable layers in cooler weather. Recommended shoes are athletic or walking shoes, or lightweight hiking boots. Minimize pocket items, jewelry, watches, and large belts or buckles, as they must be removed on the course. Gloves with leather palms are recommended for high-course activities. Sunglasses are not recommended; sunscreen should be used in hot weather. Retaining bands for prescription glasses should be used. Bring a bandana if you have one. In warm weather, insect repellent is wise to protect against chiggers. In wet weather the use of rain gear may make the difference in continuing the experience or stopping.

### *Food*

Normal one-day COPE experiences need to provide for lunch. It is requested that each team provide lunch for themselves and two facilitators. (They are highly trained, unpaid volunteers who give their time.) Food may be brought from home to the site, or a non-participating adult may go out to purchase sandwiches, pizza, or burgers at nearby commercial establishments. Travel to a commercial establishment by the whole team is not recommended because of the time consumed. For the same reason, cooking should not be planned during the lunch break. Lunch break is 30 to 45 minutes near noon.

Food for corporate COPE experiences is usually provided through other arrangements.

Only drinking water and restroom facilities are provided at the site. We recommended each participant bring his own cup, water bottle, or canteen; you may bring your own drink flavoring, if desired. Soft drinks are acceptable for lunch, but not recommended for re-hydration/refreshment. Bring a plastic bag to collect and remove your garbage at the end of the day. There are no garbage receptacles because of the animals in the park.

**ALCOHOL IS PROHIBITED ON SCOUT PROPERTY AND SMOKING IS PROHIBITED ON THE COPE COURSE. (Our trails are covered with wood mulch.)**

#### *Weather*

COPE activities can be performed in most mild weather conditions. In the event of extremes, such as heavy rain, lightning, freezing temperatures, or announced weather alerts, activities will be discontinued or not started. The decision of the COPE staff member will be final on this matter. Where possible, activities will be rescheduled; otherwise, they will be refunded, in full or in part.

#### *Camping facilities*

Camping sites are available for overnight stays. Separate arrangements should be made through the Scout Service Center for camping at McGimsey Scout Park or Bear Creek Scout Reservation in conjunction with your COPE experience.

#### *Time*

Most one-day COPE experiences are scheduled on Saturday from 8 am to 4 or 5 pm. Participants are discouraged from leaving and returning to the site during daytime hours; the activities are cumulative and parts should not be missed. The entire team should be on site before the starting time so that full benefit of the day may be enjoyed.

#### *Arrival Instructions*

The McGimsey Park COPE course is located at 2226 N.W. Military Highway, San Antonio, Texas. Entrance is off of Wedgewood Lane on the west side of the park. Go past the wooden and black gate entrance to a fence gate near Westby Street, it will be on your left. Park parallel to the street on the scout park side. Enter the gate and look for COPE staff or participants at the COPE Pavilion. Don't be late; you'll be cutting into your own fun! HAVE A GOOD DAY!!!