

## **“The JAG Model is NOT for Everyone!”**

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**THE JAG MODEL** is built on over two decades of experience in implementing more than a 1,000 school-to-work, dropout prevention and dropout recovery programs serving at-risk youth. The model has been revised in a continuous effort to improve program outcomes. **The JAG Model is not for everyone!**

- It is not a model for those who desire a youth program with little structure or few common elements from school to school.
- Those who prefer a "do your own thing" model of youth programming will not be happy with the JAG Model.
- The JAG Model is not an appropriate model for those who do not wish to emphasize employment outcomes for youth.
- It is not an appropriate model for those who do not wish to be responsible for improving the quality of jobs obtained by graduates.
- Those who prefer an "all things to all people" model emphasizing any type of positive termination will not be happy with the JAG Model.
- The JAG Model is also not for those who believe that it is only the responsibility of students to find their own jobs.
- Those who believe that job specialists should be viewed as only teachers, not labor market intermediaries, will not be happy with the JAG Model.
- The JAG Model is also not for those who believe that responsibility for the student ends once the student has left high school.

As emphasized, the JAG Model is based on the premise that the program is totally responsible for these young people during the first nine months after graduation. Those who prefer a "we should have taught all you need to know model" will not be happy with this aspect of the JAG Model.

Finally, the **JAG Model is based on formal accountability systems**. Those who wish little or no formal accountability and a bare bones record-keeping and documentation system will not be happy with the JAG Model. **The JAG Model clearly is not for everyone**. But, for those who believe in **program structure, an emphasis on youth employment outcomes, a sustained commitment to improving the labor market prospects of at-risk youth and accountability for performance** will find the JAG Model designed to satisfy their basic needs. Close adherence to the JAG Model and effective monitoring of performance will **guarantee** that effective youth programming does take place at the local level.

Since its inception, Jobs for America's Graduates accepted the challenge to accomplish two critically important objectives:

- To design and test a school-to-work transition program that offers relevant, interesting and personally rewarding learning experiences that will encourage at-risk students to stay in school, receive a high school diploma (or GED) and find a full-time job that fits the career interests and capabilities of each student or combine work and school by pursuing a postsecondary education.
- To provide the employment community with qualified, motivated and career-oriented entry-level workers.

## THE EARLY YEARS

Jobs for America's Graduates established its model program in the State of Delaware in 1979 under the leadership of Governor Pete du Pont, Kenneth M. Smith, Education Advisor (Smith has served as President of JAG since its inception) and senior government and private sector supporters.

Based on the success of Delaware's statewide effort, Jobs for America's Graduates, Inc. was created for the purpose of testing Delaware's successful model on a national scale. The decision to organize JAG was predicated on the conviction of those in Delaware—and the leaders from across the country—that a more **comprehensive** state approach was necessary for at-risk youth to stay in school and secure a quality job upon graduation. The difficulty in finding employment was based upon a recessionary economy and the long-term problem of youth unemployment. This conclusion was supported by the staff of the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations which, in concert with the United States Department of Labor, provided funding to underwrite the establishment of the implementation of the JAG Model in four additional states—Massachusetts, Arizona, Missouri and Tennessee. Until 2001, JAG has never received federal funds nationally. In 2000 and 2001, the United States Congress awarded an Earmark Grant to JAG.

In 1986, the Board of Directors expanded the mission of JAG to combine the 12th grade school-to-work transition program with a dropout prevention approach for 9th, 10th and 11th grade students. That decision was based on the determination for at-risk youth to stay in school, graduate and be placed in a **quality job** upon graduation.

The initial test site for the dropout prevention component was the Jobs for Tennessee Graduates Program in Nashville. Called "Opportunity Awareness Program" (OAP), the expansion into lower grades in high school (9th through 11th grades) was well received by Job Specialists who believed that youth could be better served if they were able to deliver JAG Model services in lower grades. Both Nashville and Jobs for Maine's Graduates tested the 7th and 8th grade early intervention application of the JAG Model. The early results were encouraging and state affiliates expanded into the lower grades (9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>) using the JAG Model.

By the close of the 1994-1995 school year, more than 175,000 young people were served in twenty-two states. Four more states launched JAG programs in the 1995-96 school year.

## UNITED KINGDOM TESTS JAG MODEL

After several visits and orientations to JAG Model programs in the U.S., the United Kingdom (UK) tested, beginning in 1990, a key component of the JAG Model—the Career Association. The UK organized business-education partnerships called "Compacts" in 63 metropolitan areas (fashioned after the Boston Compact). Students who were served by the Compacts set school performance and career-oriented goals for themselves which, when achieved, guaranteed training and a job or a job with training upon graduation from high school. Graduation usually occurred at age 16. Some students had difficulty achieving some of their goals. The "Compact Plus Clubs," modeled after the JAG Career Association, were tested in seven Compacts in at least 21 schools during 1990-92.

Since student-led, motivational in-school clubs was new to the UK, a team of eight representatives attended JAG's National Training Seminar (NTS) in 1991 in Knoxville, Tennessee, to learn firsthand how and why the Career Association was so successful. The delegation spoke with state officers in Ohio. They were impressed with the students' frankness and their ability to verbally express the ways the Career Association positively impacted their lives. Attending the NTS afforded them the opportunity to learn about JAG and the Career Association during meetings with Job Specialists.

Career Association advisors and program managers are responsible for making JAG work in America's high schools. This sharing continued throughout the school year with Compact Plus Club "twinned" with a Career Association Chapter.

The first National Conference of the Compact Plus Clubs was held in March of 1991. JAG staff assisted with the UK national conferences and conducted training for club advisers. Compact Plus Clubs were sponsored by a charitable organization (Business in the Community) chaired by the Prince of Wales, Prince Charles. In 2000, the sponsorship was moved to the Prince's Trust, also chaired by Prince Charles.

The success of the application of the JAG Model in the United Kingdom is best summarized by Prime Minister John Major in his letter to Governor John R. McKernan, Chairman of the JAG Board of Directors, "...I hope that British involvement in JAG can be continued so that both countries may learn from each other. I, therefore, welcome JAG's plans to work with British organizations, including TECs, to develop new ways of helping young people to achieve their full potential and get quality jobs, and wish them every success..."

Renewed enthusiasm for expanding the JAG Model in the United Kingdom occurred in 1995 with the awarding of a two-year grant by the International Youth Foundation to replicate the full JAG Model.

### **SCHOOL-TO-WORK OPPORTUNITIES ACT**

With the passage of the School-to-Work Opportunities Acts of 1993, 1994, JAG's initiative received new energy. The JAG Model satisfied the federal legislation requiring a statewide school-to-work system that contained three major components:

- School-Based Learning
- Work-Based Learning
- Connecting Activities

The JAG Model achieved extraordinary results by delivering an array of services to at-risk students in high school followed by twelve-months of follow-up services after graduation.

### **JAG MODEL FEATURES**

It is important that the design features and performance standards that are built into the JAG Model are understood. Since its inception, JAG sought to accumulate knowledge of its own local and state program successes and those of other school-to-work and dropout prevention programs throughout the country. This knowledge was useful in designing and operating model-driven programs in the USA and UK. Research findings were incorporated into the JAG Model improving graduation rates and the employability of young people. The model should not be viewed as fixed—enhancements in quality and performance are constantly being sought. At the National Training Seminar, held in July annually, members of the JAG National Network are asked for suggestions to enhance services and outcomes of JAG participants.

### **BASIC GOALS**

The Senior School-to-Career Program Application does not have one goal—it has a set of goals. It is important to understand that the goals are to be achieved during the 21-month period that Specialists are delivering JAG Model services. These goals can be classified into three major categories.

- **Those goals that are related to in-school activities**—what students are expected to accomplish

during the course of their participation in the program.

- **A set of immediate post-program goals**—what is to be achieved in the way of labor market outcomes for young people shortly after they graduate from high school.
- **A set of longer term goals**—what young people are expected to achieve for themselves during the twelve-month period after graduation.

**The in-school goals** for a JAG Model Program can be divided into two areas. **First**, there are in-school goals that are related to **improvements in the employability skills and knowledge** of the participants. **Secondly**, JAG wants to develop **job readiness skills that employers believe are fundamental to success on the job**, including: personal motivation, ability to work in a group setting and communication skills.

**The immediate post-program goals** include:

- **Labor Force Attachment.** The JAG Model is designed to **strengthen the labor force attachment** of participants in the early school leaving period. Since its inception, JAG guaranteed that young people did not spend a substantial period of time drifting in and out of the labor market after completing school. JAG researchers found that graduates who moved aimlessly from one job to another or experiencing long periods of joblessness were associated with high personal and societal costs. The first post-program objective is to make certain **that young people upon graduation can immediately enter the labor market in search of work and remain strongly attached to the labor market during the 12-month period following graduation.**
- **Unemployment Avoidance.** The program is also designed to improve the likelihood that JAG participants will be able to avoid unemployment when in the labor market. Long spells of unemployment typically characterize "at-risk" youth in America's labor market. If graduates encounter an unemployment spell, JAG Specialists are committed to reducing the period of unemployment.
- **Full-time Employment.** The longer-term goals of the program are to enhance the graduate's ability **to secure and retain full-time employment in the first year following graduation.** Graduates that opt to continue their education are encouraged to work part-time to reinforce the JAG competencies and establish a positive work record.

A major obstacle faced by young high school graduates in the American labor markets, particularly at-risk youth, is their **inability to secure full-time employment.** JAG Specialists are committed to helping participants obtain and retain full-time jobs during the 12-month post-graduation period.

- **Changes in Status.** The JAG Model is designed to improve young people's ability to achieve improvements for themselves in terms of hours of work, hourly wage increases and/or promotions during the 12-month follow-up period. Securing positive changes in status is an objective that JAG wants participants to achieve including improvement in earnings and occupational mobility during the follow-up period. The follow-up services of Specialists contribute in a substantive manner to the attainment of changes in status.

## **DELIVERY OF SERVICES**

The JAG Model is designed to achieve the previously stated goals for young people through a variety of services. The services consist of the following:

- **Group and individual instruction** in an integrated series of thirty-seven (37) employment

competency areas for those students who are involved in the program for at least two or more years.

- A **student-led Career Association** that will provide participants with opportunities to:
  - organize career, leadership, social and community service activities
  - develop, practice and refine leadership skills
  - work effectively as a member of a team—in a leadership or followership role
- **deliver job development and placement assistance** and follow-up services for participants, employers and postsecondary institutions throughout the 12-month follow-up phase.

The JAG Model is designed to provide a structured set of services that build on one another and continue for twelve months after graduation to increase the likelihood that the goals of the program will be achieved.

### **PROGRAM PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND STANDARDS**

The JAG Model is based on a series of program performance measures and standards. The performance measures and standards in the JAG Model reflect the diverse set of objectives of the program. JAG also offers data collection and management system to guarantee that performance measures and standards are measured routinely on a school by school basis. The JAG Model stipulates performance measures to determine whether program objectives have been obtained and to guarantee that schools have a data collection and management system that will produce documentation of success on a school by school basis.

The key program performance standards include:

- **Contact Hours.** Seniors, on average, were expected to receive a minimum of sixty (60) combined hours of employability skills instruction and involvement in Career Association activities. (Non-seniors should receive no fewer than eighty (80) hours of regular and sustained contact to improve academic performance and personal attributes through classroom, remediation, directed work experience and Career Association activities.) Today, senior participants receive an average of 135 contact hours during the 9-month in-school phase of the program. Since 90% of JAG programs use scheduled time and provide academic credit for participation, most participants should achieve 180 hours of contact for the in-school phase of the program.
- The minimum participation hour standards that were set are based on past experience with respect to the minimum amount of time needed to guarantee that instruction in each of the employment competency areas can be provided. These minimum contact hours are also needed to guarantee that participants will have sufficient time to learn what they are taught, to illustrate their knowledge of what they were taught and to provide evidence of substantive gains in employability skills and knowledge. Educational research has illustrated time after time that participants learn only what they are taught and gains can only be expected to be achieved when participants have had sufficient time on task to build their skills and knowledge in the competency areas.
- **Job Placement.** With respect to job placement, JAG's performance standards require that by September 30 of the year following graduation, a minimum of sixty percent (60%) of the graduates will be employed in civilian jobs, either full-time or part-time or be serving in a branch of the nation's armed forces. Secondly, eighty percent (80%) of graduates will either be employed or enrolled in postsecondary education or a training institution at the time of each monthly follow-up from September 30 to June 30. Thirdly, of those young people working, it is expected that sixty percent (60%) of them will be holding full-time jobs in the civilian labor market or in the nation's armed forces.

In accord with the definitions of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, a full-time job is one (or a set of jobs) that provides 35 or more hours of work per week.

- **Follow-up Services.** Specialists are responsible for providing follow-up services to both participants and employers over the 12-month follow-up phase following graduation. These follow-up services are intended to increase the likelihood that graduates will be able to show positive changes in their employment status over the follow-up phase in one or more of the following areas:
  - an increase in hours of work
  - an improvement in hourly wages
  - a promotion on the job within the same firm or in a different firm over the 12-month follow-up phase

## THE JAG MODEL

The JAG Model, which was the primary focus of the organization prior to 1988 (when the dropout prevention elements of the "comprehensive model" were introduced) includes the following components.

- The employment of **Specialists** who take personal responsibility for 35 to 45 young 12th graders who are at risk of becoming unemployed or of not graduating or both.
- A highly motivational **student-led organization** (based on the success of Junior Achievement, FFA, DECA, HOSA and similar groups). The goal is to provide personal motivation, which JAG believes is a critical element in developing the self-confidence necessary to succeed in the workplace.
- A focus on **thirty-seven (37) job-related competencies** developed in cooperation with the private sector. These competencies are achieved through a variety of activity-based curricula drawn from both public and commercial materials. Based on evaluations by JAG staff at the national and local levels, these curricula materials are regularly revised. With the introduction of the Multi-Year Program Application, JAG expanded the number of competencies from 37 to 81. JAG commissioned a curriculum team to design activity-based modules that includes pre- and post-assessments, math and reading activities, and participant handouts
- Provision of needed remediation and basic skills education drawn from available resources in the schools or the community.
- Provision of any necessary social services required to help young people overcome barriers to staying in school and getting good jobs.
- Intensive job development activities for a specific geographic territory where the Specialist is responsible for persuading employers to accept JAG youth—at least on a trial basis—upon graduation or before.
- Twelve full months of follow-up after graduation to ensure that the job has career potential and to solve problems which may occur on the job. A crucial follow-up objective is to gain a raise or promotion for each employed graduate.
- Extended follow-up for participants that fail to graduate or receive a positive outcome at the conclusion of the twelve-month follow-up period.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

Accredited JAG Programs are those that demonstrate a strong commitment to "accountability" by establishing performance standards to determine success in serving the needs of program participants.

Key performance standards include:

- Select program participants by an in-school advisory committee (100%). The selection process should target students with the greatest number of barriers to graduation and employment as documented on the Student Profile.
- Provide eighty-five percent (85%) of seniors with sixty (60) contact hours and non-seniors with eighty (80) hours of contact.
- Students will attain all JAG competencies as prescribed (100%).
- Complete Student Profiles for all students (100%).
- Maintain documentation for students as prescribed in JAG Model (100%).
- Utilize the National Career Association as an instructional and motivational tool (100%).
- Encourage participants to remain in school through graduation (100%).
- Complete graduation requirements or GED by June 30. (90%).
- Recover non-graduates (based on September 30) through high school graduation or receipt of a GED (50%).
- Achieve eighty percent (80%) positive outcomes among seniors.
- Place no less than sixty percent (60%) of graduates in civilian and full-time military jobs.
- Place no less than sixty percent (60%) of employed graduates in full-time jobs.
- Contact 100% of graduates and non-graduates (monthly) and employers (five times) during the twelve-month follow-up period. Maintain contact with non-seniors during the summer months to increase the probability of their returning to school.
- Achieve a positive change of status during the follow-up period for no less than 50% of graduates.
- Provide extended follow-up services to 100% of graduates who are unemployed or unavailable on June 30. Extended follow-up services to non-graduates should include schooling and work outcomes.
- No less than fifty percent (50%) of non-seniors should return to school the next year.
- It should be noted that programs which serve the most at-risk young people in "alternative schools" or "community-based schools" are not expected to achieve the same performance outcomes as programs offered in comprehensive high schools or vocational schools.

## CRITICAL IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES CRITICAL IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

Having worked extensively with high schools, alternative schools, academies, after school programs, community colleges more than two decades, there are several critical issues which face local and state decision makers in successfully implementing the JAG Model.

### START-UP ISSUES

- **Audience.** It must be determined if there are sufficient number of young people who are in need of the services provided at-risk youth. The JAG Model has been used effectively with the following types of at-risk participants:
  - Seniors (12<sup>th</sup> graders)
  - Non-seniors (9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades)
  - Out-of-school youth (dropouts)
- "At-risk" describes those students who may not stay in school through graduation, who have dropped out of school and/or will find it difficult to achieve a successful attachment to the labor force upon leaving high school."
- **Commitment.** Once it is determined that sufficient number of young people need, want and can profit from a JAG Program, it is essential that the employment community and school system enter into a partnership that will result in keeping students in school through graduation and transitioning them into the workforce immediately following graduation or upon completion of a postsecondary education. The employment community is expected to provide:
  - access to quality jobs
  - access to private sector expertise
  - a bottom-line perspective
  - private funding to supplement public funds

The school system is expected to provide:

- access to at-risk students in the schools or the community
- access to public sector expertise
- access to public funding
- a "people" perspective to combine with the private sector's bottom-line perspective

An early meeting should be held with parents to explain the value-added benefits of the program to their children.

- **Ownership.** A technique for building local or state commitment is to establish a local non-profit corporation to accept oversight responsibilities for school-to-work transition and dropout prevention. Knowing that people support what they help create, a private/public sector oversight body is a successful technique in securing the level of commitment needed to ensure success. The non-profit Board of Directors should be comprised of key leaders in all facets of the community (private sector, government, education, community-based organizations, labor unions, and religious organizations) with no less than 51% of the board members representing the private sector.

- **Goal-Setting.** The oversight body should establish goals that can be used to evaluate the success of the program. Goals should include:
  - to reduce the dropout rate
  - to increase the graduation rate
  - to reduce the unemployment rate among graduates
  
- **Funding.** Secure the appropriate commitments for funding the program for no less than a 3-year period. Private sector funds should be sought from corporations, individuals and private foundations. Public sector funds across the JAG National Network come from: general funds (state, county, and city), local education funds, Workforce Investment Act, Wagner-Peyser (7B), Carl Perkins Act (vocational funds), dropout prevention funds, criminal justice funds, welfare to work (TANF), state school-to-work, etc.
  
- **Program Staff.** The success of the JAG program is due in large part to the quality of the program staff, particularly the Specialist, the staff member primarily responsible for approximately 35 to 40 students in the in-school phase and another 35-40 students in the follow-up phase. The essential qualities of a program manager should include:
  - private sector experience
  - public sector (teaching) experience
  - youth-oriented
  - results-oriented
  - strong people skills
  - good planning and implementation skills
  - familiarity with private and public funding sources
  - high level of commitment to accountability.

The characteristics of a JAG Specialist include:

- youth-advocate
  - high energy
  - understands the job
  - positive role model
  - street-wise
  - good communication skills
  - effective teacher/trainer
  - willingness to make "cold calls" to employers and others who are needed to supplement the program
  - high personal self-esteem
  - flexibility
  - commitment to accountability
  - understands the importance of documenting students served, services delivered and outcomes achieved using the National Data Management System
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- **Planning.** Program staff and the oversight board prepares program planning documents, including:
    - Management Plan
    - Staff Development Plan
    - Employer Marketing and Job Development Plan
    - Annual Plan (used to produce program profile for Annual Report)
    - Technology Plan

- **Staff Development.** Arrange new staff training for both managers and Job Specialists with JAG Field Services. The initial year of training should include: three days of initial JAG Model training, two days of follow-up training (fall or winter), and in-house refreshers and problem-solving sessions.
- **Annual Network Meeting.** Program staff should participate in the annual National Training Seminar (held in July) and the Management Development Institute (held immediately prior to the NTS).
- **Physical Requirements.** Secure adequate office space in a strategic location, furniture, computer, equipment, supplies, and telephone. Secure a permanent classroom, instructional resources, furniture, equipment, and supplies.

### IN-SCHOOL ISSUES

- **Advisory Committee.** Establish in-school advisory committees for the purpose of screening, selecting, and supporting program participants. The committee should include: administrator (principal or associate principal), counselor, academic teacher (English and/or math), vocational teacher.
- **Access.** Determine how best to access program participants. While JAG prefers access to be achieved through a scheduled, credit course, some schools have provided access through a non-credit, unscheduled time, shared time (by being enrolled in another class, like a vocational class), or a rotation schedule.
- **Selection Process.** Implement the JAG program model selection process which includes: Student Profile, advisory committee meetings, student interviews, and review of school records (grades, test scores, attendance data, etc.). The Advisory Committee must approve the Program Roster which is submitted to JAG upon completion of the selection process.
- **Student and Parent Commitment.** Secure commitment using JAG's Student Parent Commitment Form.
- **Career Association.** Establish a student-led and motivational organization to be called the Career Association. The purpose of the Career Association is for participants to develop, practice and refine their personal, leadership, and employability skills in a group setting. Career Association activities include: student officers, Initiation and Installation Ceremony (I&I), program of work, chapter meetings, committee meetings, social events, community service projects, recognition opportunities, competitive events, leadership development/refinement, and team building.
- **Curriculum.** All program participants should achieve no less than the **core** 37 JAG competencies. JAG provides programs with 81 National Curriculum Modules.
- **Guidance and Counseling.** Provide guidance and counseling services for participants that respond to personal and educational barriers to achieve successful outcomes.
- **Remediation.** Provide for academic remediation where necessary to overcome basic skill deficiencies.
- **Marketing.** Market the program services to the school and employment community. Develop marketing tools including: state emblem (JAG will develop upon request) letterhead, envelope, business card, label, newsletter, direct mail, newspaper advertising, public service announcements (PSAs), press conferences, brochures and videos.

- **Placement.** Develop "quality" full-time jobs since they provide the greatest long-term impact on earnings and advancement. Quality jobs are also those that provide: employee benefit packages (health insurance, education financing, etc.), jobs with training, youth-oriented attitude among management, effective supervision, advancement opportunities, and occupational specific training (refer to vocational programs, adult classes, night school).

## **FOLLOW-UP ISSUES**

- **Referrals.** Refer graduates to jobs that match interests and skills.
- **Follow-up Contacts with Employers.** Employers should be contacted no less than five times during the 12-month follow-up phase. The purposes of conducting employer contacts are to: reduce turnover, improve job performance, improve attendance, improve attitude, encourage initiative, reinforce positive behaviors, encourage advancement opportunities, and explain how working with the JAG program impacts "bottom line."
- **Follow-up Contacts with Program Participants.** Conduct monthly follow-up contacts for twelve (12) months after graduation. Participants should be contacted for the purpose of: sharing information gained from employer follow-up contacts, identify barriers to success, establish a plan of action to overcome barriers, establish short-term and long-term goals, etc.
- **Change of Status.** Secure a positive change of status during the follow-up period. A positive change in status includes: increase in salaries, increase in number of hours worked, promotions and new job assignments with increased responsibilities.
- **Program Outcomes.** Record status of all program participants to determine the extent to which program outcomes are achieved. Key program outcomes include:
  - Graduation rate from high school or completion of a GED. Standard: 90%.
  - Positive outcomes rate, including: employment or school. Standard: 80%.
  - Placement rate including jobs or the military. Standard: 60%
  - Full-time jobs rate of all those employed. Standard: 60%
  - Full-time placement rate including: full-time employed participants and those who are combining work and school for full-time placement. Standard: 80%
- **Additional Outcomes.** Other outcomes which should be reviewed include:
  - twelve months of uninterrupted employment experience
  - minimal periods of unemployment
  - advancement beyond an entry level job
  - improvement in self-esteem
  - improvement in basic skills (especially reading and math)
  - development of leadership qualities and skills
  - recognition through the Career Association
  - development of a vision of the future (hopes, goals).
- **Extended Follow-up Services.** Provide extended follow-up services to selected participants beyond the 12-month follow-up phase. Extended follow-up services are value-added benefits of implementing the JAG Model. The extended follow-up services are provided those graduates and non-graduates that fit one or more of the following categories: available/unemployed, college/education only, unavailable and non-graduates.

## QUALITATIVE ISSUES

- **Continuous Improvement.** Improve program services for current and future program participants. Questions to be asked include: "What can we do better than we're currently doing?" "What should we be doing that we didn't do?" and "What should we stop doing that we're currently doing?"
- **Site Reviews.** Participate in site reviews conducted by JAG to determine the extent to which the JAG Model has been implemented. Site reviews are an important source of information for the Accreditation Report.
- **National Network Data Base.** Contribute to the National Network Data Base and Research Program. The purposes are:
  - to improve services provided program participants
  - to document the successes and areas of improvement in the program model
  - to improve the understanding of how best to work with at-risk youth in the program
  - to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of intervening with students even as late as their senior year
  - and to document the network's ability to decrease the dropout rate, increase the graduation rate, reduce youth employment after graduation, and increase the rate of employment among at-risk youth.
- **JAG National Summary Reports.** Receive management information and research reports from JAG to identify program highlights, identify program specific observations, determine management actions, design in-service program staff, and establish objectives for the next year.
- **JAG National Network.** Assist in the building a stronger JAG National Network to provide national visibility for school-to-career, dropout prevention, and dropout recovery programs adhering to the JAG Model. Given greater visibility and numbers, JAG will leverage greater benefits to the National Network and individual state and local affiliates.
- **Accountability.** Demonstrate a commitment to "accountability" by establishing minimum performance standards by which programs can determine their success in serving the needs of at-risk youth.

## BARRIERS IN IMPLEMENTING THE JAG MODEL

In the accreditation process, local and state affiliates are visited by a JAG site reviewer (or team) to determine the extent to which the JAG Model has been successfully implemented. After visiting thousands of site reviews, JAG identified a checklist of barriers which keep programs from achieving the high performance outcomes expected of a JAG affiliate. The barriers most often identified include:

1. Lack of commitment to implementing the JAG Program Model as presented.
2. Lack of an oversight body at the local and/or state level to take ownership of the program.
3. Where the program model is driven by the funding source rather than the program model.

4. The program staff has a "school orientation" rather than a "private sector orientation." For example, there is a resistance to accountability built into the program model, there is no bottom-line orientation, or the job specialist wants to be a "social worker" rather than a "job specialist."
5. When specialists are reluctant to leave the school building and link with the private sector -- potential employers, Chamber of Commerce, trade associations, unions, etc.
6. Unwillingness to market the program to employers through a year-round employer marketing and public relations program.
7. Lack of pre-testing/assessment as an initial career development step toward identification of barriers.
8. Unwillingness or lack of ability of implementing the JAG curriculum.
9. Lack of parental ownership, contact or involvement.
10. Resistance to paperwork and documentation required of highly accountable programs.
11. Lack of regular staff development.
12. Lack of knowledge of the JAG Model or rationale; unwillingness to conduct periodic meetings to discuss core values and JAG standards.
13. Limited use of research findings and management information; unwillingness to share and discuss results with staff.
14. Recruitment of too many participants to be able to deliver quality services. 15. Recruitment of too few participants resulting in too high of participant costs.
15. Failure to identify and mobilize in-school and community resources not included in the JAG program budget.
16. Inappropriate use of the advisory committee; existing in name only; never meets to discuss the pool of at-risk youth eligible for program services; does not allow the advisory committee to take ownership of those selected.
17. Targeting primarily income eligible participants; incentives should be provided to Specialists that target students with multiple barriers to graduation and employment.
18. Lack of adequate contact hours which usually occurs in unscheduled contact or non-credited situations.
19. Lack of creativity and imagination in the classroom; competency plans which are sketchy and show little time and effort expended.
20. Unwillingness to use nontraditional and participatory classroom techniques.
21. Lack of empathy or patience for working with at-risk youth.
22. Unwillingness to track participants during the in-school and follow-up phase of the JAG Program.

23. Inability to place graduates in quality jobs at graduation; waiting until graduation to help graduates locate quality jobs.
24. Lack of understanding of what impact periods of unemployment have on at-risk youth and their work history.
25. Lack of monthly contact with graduates and non-graduates during the follow-up period; substituting contact with relatives and friends for participant contact; believing that follow-up contact is for "verification" rather than delivery of vital services to at-risk youth and cooperating employers.
26. Poor use of the Career Association as a motivational and instructional tool to develop JAG competencies.
27. Too much control of the Career Association chapter by the chapter advisor.
28. Using the Career Association primarily for social development.
29. Not conducting an impressive and memorable I&I Ceremony at the beginning of the year.
30. Not offering or participating in the Career Development Conference.
31. Lack of regular and productive follow-up with employers.
32. Expecting graduates to find their own jobs.
33. Saying, "I taught them how - they should be able to find their own jobs." Not realizing that all they will get are "same old teen jobs" with too many graduates not finding any jobs.
34. Lack of giving emphasis in employer contacts on the need for a change in status.
35. Lack of emphasis on quality jobs; not realizing the self-esteem growth that occurs when a graduate has a "quality job."
36. Lack of personal contact with graduates/non-graduates/employers; too much reliance on telephone contact rather than building long-term relationships.
37. Lack of courage to conduct door-to-door marketing to identify or develop quality jobs.
38. Lack of a local public relations program to support employer marketing and job development efforts.
39. Lack of involvement by Board members in school-based services, career association, and employer marketing and public relations efforts. Lack of understanding as to how the JAG Model components fit together in a systematic delivery of services with expected outcomes.
40. Lack of integrity in reporting data on JAG reports.
41. Claiming positive outcomes for students in jobs which they had before selection into the program and with no significant change of status at graduation.

42. Too little effort to document accurately and completely. Submitting paperwork that is incomplete and not checked by the Board and/or management team.
43. Lack of attention to deadlines -- no sense of urgency.
44. Lack of strategic planning and a recognition the management plans prescribed by JAG should be "living" documents.
45. Lack of management attention to "outcomes" and "standards."
46. Believing that job specialists or programs do not require supervision.
47. Lack of an incentive program to recognize the program's "heroes."
48. Assignment of Specialists to two or more schools with the expectation of producing JAG Model outcomes.
50. Unwillingness to budget monies for staff development activities to take full advantage of networking dynamics.

### LESSONS LEARNED

Jobs for America's Graduates has over two decades of experience in operating proven and successful models of school-to-career, dropout recovery and dropout prevention programs in more than 1,000 schools. More than **275,000 young people** in a variety of rural, suburban and urban areas have been involved in JAG's senior school-to-career, dropout prevention or the out-of-school/dropout recovery program.

Based on JAG's experience, it is vital that a statewide system be established with the following characteristics:

1. **Someone must be held accountable for results**—an institution, a board of directors, or an individual, or everyone. One of the chief failures of other statewide systems is that everyone, in theory, is "responsible" —therefore, **no one** is accountable.
2. **There must be clear, quantifiable outcome goals.** Unless goals are specified, it will be impossible to determine if the JAG system made a difference. Improving the percentage of high school graduates, improving the employment rate, improving the quality of jobs young people get and improving their academic and skill achievements and goals that can be quantified.

The current "baseline" data (percentages of how the schools and job training system are doing at the moment) should be stated, then, establish goals for improving results by a significant amount within three to five years.

3. **The people who link young people, schools and employers are the essential feature of a successful system.** Therefore, there must be adequate investment in those people—including salaries, extensive orientation and in-service training and the necessary tools to do their jobs.
4. **One person should be responsible for the school-to-work process.** As one example of many, too many programs "hand off" young people from one person or agency to another. The schools complete their work and turn over the young people to find jobs on their own or, failing that, to enter the job training system.

An essential feature of JAG has been that Specialists are required to see that young people make a successful transition and achieve a full 12-months of employment (the time considered necessary to assure a genuine "attachment" to the labor force).

5. **A good deal of effort should be devoted to engaging employers.** Other youth serving programs often fail because they do not understand the needs of business—especially small business—and how to fulfill needs to assure a true partnership.

The majority of JAG participants are employed within small and medium-sized businesses. Job Specialists provide regular on-site assistance to employers to assure that problems are solved quickly.

6. This may sound simple-but it is essential: **Young people must have first-hand experience in how to present themselves and prepare for and secure jobs.** Time and again, JAG graduates reported that what they found important was being able to effectively "sell themselves" to employers. Also Important is giving them a consistent set of skills that the private sector considers essential for the interview process and which will develop good candidates for hiring.

6. **It is important to share the responsibility beyond to public institutions.** Most "systems" turn out to be nothing more than paper with one or more individual institutions getting the money - and therefore being viewed as "owning" the program. The school-to-work *system* will not work, in our judgment, unless responsibility is shared by both the public and private sectors.

It is the organization that should be held accountable for setting and meeting the desired goals. Its board of directors should include the key leaders who can make decisions that are lasting. For that reason, we recommend the formation of a nonprofit corporation. In such an organization, you can bring together leaders of the key institutions that are essential to a successful school-to-career system, important employers and key community leaders.

8. **Partnerships should be developed with national employers to provide quality work-based learning experiences.** JAG has begun developing partnerships with national employers who are willing to provide work-based learning experiences for young people interested in a particular career field. Those responsible for connecting students with employers need support from state and national organizations.

9. **The JAG Model is adaptable to the following at-risk populations:**

- Seniors who may have difficulty in graduating from high school and/or transitioning into the work place
- Younger students who might leave school before their senior year
- Youth who left school and are willing to pursue a GED and other aspects of the Dropout Recovery Program

10. **The JAG Model was successfully demonstrated in the United States and the United Kingdom.**

## **IN CONCLUSION**

Jobs for America's Graduates is able to offer states a proven, comprehensive system that is "ready to go." The JAG Board of Directors and National Staff are committed to helping all states and territories to establish statewide school-to-career, dropout prevention, and dropout recovery programs based upon the lessons learned by JAG over two decades of service to at-risk youth.