



Joint Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice Oversight

October 26, 2021

Mister Chair and Members of the Committee:

I am Chuck Knapp, President/CEO of Jobs for America's Graduates-Kansas. I am joined today by Mike Monaghan, principal of the Gardner-Lawrence High School located in the Kansas Juvenile Correctional Complex in Topeka. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about JAG-K and our role in preventing students from entering the juvenile justice system, and reducing recidivism if intervention services are required.

JAG-K Overview

JAG-K helps students prepare for successful futures. We are one of 40 state affiliate organizations of Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG), which was founded in 1980. JAG-K is in its ninth year in Kansas. This year, JAG-K has 79 JAG accredited programs, in 63 schools, in 43 school districts, serving approximately 4,000 students. JAG-K also has 4 Transitions Specialists to serve students in foster care who are unable to participate in a traditional JAG-K program.

JAG-K is an in-school, elective class, where students are taught leadership and career development skills by their JAG-K Career Specialist, who is an employee of JAG-K. The Career Specialist works with an Advisory Council usually comprised of school counselors, administrators, and sometimes community members, to determine which students will be placed in the JAG-K program. Students must meet a minimum of six criteria to be eligible for JAG-K.

JAG Eligibility Criteria Examples:

- Low Academic Performance
- Homeless
- Lacks Maturity to Pursue Education or Career Goals
- Is Economically Disadvantaged as defined by eligibility for Free or Reduced Lunch, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or other public economic assistance.
- Inadequate or No Work Experience

The JAG model program is three to four classes of no more than 15 students per class, for a maximum of 60 students per program. The minimum number of students per program is 35. Some schools have multiple programs.

Over the course of a multi-year JAG program, students will be introduced to 87 competencies related to employability, career development, leadership development, life survival and personal skills. These are the skills most employers tell us workers need but are often not equipped with when entering the workforce.

The competencies are primarily introduced through project-based learning activities. We also introduce competencies and career exploration opportunities through regional and statewide events, campus and workplace visits, guest speakers and other innovative strategies.

Students are required to invest a minimum of 10 hours serving their communities and a minimum of eight hours during the JAG-K class focused on academic remediation to ensure they are successful in classes outside the JAG-K program.

Each JAG-K program has a student organization called the JAG-K Career Association. Students are required to be part of the Career Association and given the opportunity to run for officer positions at the local, regional and state levels. State Career Association officers participate in JAG-K Day at the Capitol in Topeka, and they qualify for the JAG National Student Leadership Academy in Washington, D.C.

The JAG-K program is a 12-month program, requiring JAG-K Career Specialists to maintain contact with students throughout the summer months, assisting them with job and job shadowing opportunities and ensuring they are continuing on a positive and successful path while not in school. In a unique feature to the JAG model, Specialists also have a 12-month follow-up period with JAG-K seniors. In that follow-up period from May 31 of their senior year to the next May, the Specialist tracks job placement, helps get students acclimated to post-secondary education and is available for additional student support.

Performance Measures

JAG has been successful for nearly 40 years in the United States because it can demonstrate results with objective data. A variety of performance measures are tracked for every student over the course of their JAG-K experience, including the 12-month follow-up period. This data covers all areas of the JAG model, including barriers overcome, competencies mastered, graduation rate, job placement rate, and positive outcomes (measured by whether the student is engaged full-time in post-secondary education/training, military service, or in the workforce. Career Specialists enter data daily for each of their students.

The most prestigious award given by JAG to affiliate organizations is the “Five of Five” Award. This award is earned by meeting or exceeding the national performance measures in five categories. JAG-K has been eligible for the award seven years and has earned it every year.

The JAG-K Class of 2020:
Graduation Rate

97 percent

Full-time Positive Outcomes	89 percent
Full-time placement (college and/or work)	97 percent

Drexel University: JAG Students More Successful Than Peers

Drexel University’s Center for Labor Markets and Policy assessed the post high school employment outcomes of JAG students compared to peers who were not in a JAG program. Lead Researcher, Dr. Paul Harrington said, “The differences between JAG graduates and the referent population were some of the greatest that the youth labor market researchers have seen.”

Some of the research findings:

- Two-thirds of all JAG Graduates (both in college and out of school, combined) were employed one year after high school graduation
- JAG Graduates were 230 percent more likely to be employed full-time compared to the average 18- to 20-year-old population.
- Black JAG Graduates were 290 percent more likely to be employed
- White JAG Graduates 210 percent more likely to be employed
- JAG Graduates not enrolled in college were 140 percent more likely to be employed
- JAG Graduates in college were 120 percent more likely to be employed
- JAG Graduates realized significant gains in weekly earnings, gains in higher hourly wages and better non-wage compensation including health insurance and retirement benefits

Funding

JAG-K is primarily funded with a small portion of the federal TANF allotment to Kansas, administered by the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF). Each school district is also assessed a program fee of \$11,000 per program. The total average cost of a JAG-K program is \$74,000. JAG-K has proven to be a remarkable return on investment, for several reasons:

- If a student doesn’t graduate from high school, they have a nearly 80 percent chance of going into poverty
- Of those who go in poverty, most end up on public assistance or in the corrections system.
- Kansas needs workers who are prepared to be trained

JAG-K as Prevention and Intervention Tool

JAG-K addresses many of the risk factors seen in students who end up in the juvenile justice system. We believe JAG-K can not only help prevent some students from getting involved in the corrections system through expansion of traditional JAG-K programs throughout the state, but we can also help reduce recidivism of those students already in the system.

Most adjudicated youth are being served in their communities. While JAG is in 43 Kansas school districts and in many large school districts, we are limited in the number

of students we can serve based on our evidence-based model. Each traditional multi-year program can serve up to 60 students in three to four classes. That is a small percentage of the student population in large high school. For example, we have five high school programs in Wichita, but we should probably have 16 to 20 programs in Wichita, plus middle school programs that feed into the high schools. We are confident we could help raise graduation rates, prevent entry into the juvenile system and help adjudicated youth get on a successful career path if given more opportunities to serve these students.

Our confidence is based on decades of experience in other states and eight years in Kansas. We have data to prove our model works. We also have thousands of former students who can attest to the positive difference JAG-K has made in their lives and the lives of their family members.

In addition to prevention and intervention through more traditional JAG-K programs in schools across the state with an emphasis on eight districts identified by the Kansas State Department of Education, we believe a JAG-K program at Lawrence Gardner High School (LGHS) in the Kansas Juvenile Correctional Complex (KJCC) would also be beneficial in preparing students for their return to their communities. Governor Kelly has been supportive of this idea in the past, and current LGHS principal Mike Monaghan has requested a JAG-K program as soon as January 2022.

AT&T has granted JAG-K \$25,000 for work with justice-involved youth, which could be used for the LGHS JAG-K program. We anticipate the cost of this program would be a little more than a traditional program at approximately \$80,000 annually. The higher cost is due to salary. We are hopeful funding can be found to start and sustain this initiative.

With permission of the chair, I request to yield the floor to Mike Monaghan to share with the Committee his thoughts about our proposal and JAG-K generally.