
OFFICE OF GOVERNOR RONNIE MUSGROVE
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: GOVERNOR
FROM: RILEY
SUBJECT: JOBS FOR MISSISSIPPI'S GRADUATES
DATE: 6/13/2000
CC: BOYD
FILE

As directed by you, I have obtained additional information on the Jobs for America's Graduates, as well as on the current status of Mississippi's affiliate, Jobs for Mississippi's Graduates.

Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG)

JAG's mission is to assist at-risk and disadvantaged youth in graduating from high school and in finding and keeping quality jobs through a state supported school-to-work transition system. JAG established its model program in Delaware in 1979 to demonstrate, evaluate and then nationally replicate a comprehensive school-to-career transition model in diverse labor markets. Successful results in eight high schools prompted its expansion to all Delaware schools in 1981. Based on the success of Delaware's statewide effort, JAG was created to test Delaware's model on a national scale. The Rockefeller and Ford Foundations joined with the U.S. Department of Labor to implement the JAB model in four other states: Massachusetts, Arizona, Missouri and Tennessee.

JAG's Board of Directors voted in 1980 to conduct a five-year "research and demonstration" program to determine whether JAG's approach could provide a national strategy for substantially reducing youth unemployment and the dropout rate among the nation's most at-risk young people. At the end of the five-year effort, eight states and more than 40,000 young people had been served. The Board elected to undertake a long-term strategy to work with all 50 states to create school-to-work transition systems utilizing JAG's proven model. JAG is now the nation's largest, most consistently applied model of school-to-work transition for at-risk youth.

JAG's services begin at age 16 or younger and continue for 12 months after the participant leaves school. JAG's performance standards include a 90% graduation/GED rate and an 80% over-all success rate (participants employed, in the military or enrolled in postsecondary training). JAG costs about \$1,200-\$1,400 per person for a calendar

year. Research shows that participants more than repay the cost of their participation within 14 months after leaving school through paid taxes if they are employed full-time.

Jobs for Mississippi's Graduates

According to Dr. Richard Thompson, Mississippi's JAG affiliate – Jobs for Mississippi Graduates (JMG) - has always been funded with JTPA funds, however, these federal funds are being eliminated. Approximately 500-550 students are participating in 16 JMG programs at 15 sites. According to Dr. Thompson, the Legislature appropriated \$750,000 to the Department of Education for JMG during the 1999 session. The Department sought \$2 million this session in order to institutionalize the program throughout the state. Dr. Thompson says that the Department anticipated an increase in potential drop outs due to more students having difficulty with Algebra I under the new accountability standards. The Legislature appropriated \$243,000, leaving an approximate \$510,000 deficit to the existing \$750,000 funding level.

Dr. Thompson said that he has spoken to J.C. Burns and Dr. Bettye Fletcher and that both have expressed an interest in the program and in identifying available funds for the program. The Department of Education has identified \$86,400 in federal School-to-Careers funds available for both federal fiscal year 2001 and fiscal year 2002. I have a call scheduled with Ken Smith, JAG National President, for Thursday morning at 8:00 to discuss other states' funding of the program, particularly the use of TANF and Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds. I am in the process of confirming that Montana has been successful in using WIA funds for its JAG-affiliated program and to obtain specifics on their process for doing so.

Jean Denson, Director of DECD's Employment Training Division, wrote the Department of Labor's Regional Administrator on June 12 requesting clarification of the use of WIA statewide funds. JAG documents report that state-level WIA funds may be used to provide "additional assistance to local areas that have high concentrations of eligible youth." Ms. Denson has requested an immediate response from the Department of Labor. Ms. Denson is also inquiring as to if any carryover JTPA funds, if they are available, could fund the administrative portion of JMG or perhaps could be coupled with WIA funds to do so.

Dr. Thompson is anxious to identify available funds to cover the approximate \$510,000 deficit in order to maintain current operations. I am working closely with Joy Milam of his staff to monitor developments in the identification of such funds. I have not contacted J.C. Burns or Dr. Fletcher directly regarding this matter, but would be happy to do so should you want me to.
