

## **Jobs for Alaska's Graduates Program (JAG) – 800.0**

The Jobs for Alaska's Graduates (JAG) initiative is a cooperative effort between public and private entities to have a direct and intentional impact on the graduation rate and the subsequent success rate of students who leave high school and enter the work force or additional training. The partnership in Alaska initially involves the Department of Education & Early Development (EED), Department of Labor and Workforce Development and the United Way. The program will have a statewide focus and be operated and monitored by United Way to maximize connections to the employers and the larger business community for support and opportunities to engage graduating students.

The initiative is currently in 33 other states and focuses on re-engaging students who are in danger of not graduating. The focus is on removing barriers in their lives that create challenges to graduating; assisting with acquiring credits necessary to graduate; and providing them with the skills to obtain and retain a job after graduation by addressing key employability competencies recognized by business leaders and employers.

The goals of JAG are met by implementing a graduation specialist into a school through a direct partnership with the principal and superintendent. Cooperatively, students are identified, interviewed and asked to join the JAG program. Graduation specialists will carry a caseload of 35-45 students, meeting with 10-15 at a time during a school period of the day. They address credit recovery issues when necessary, personal challenges that are a hindrance to success, setting a plan to graduate, and working on employability skills. JAG graduation specialists' work on a 12-month calendar rather than the school calendar, which allows time for additional connections, job shadows, and other activities that help keep students engaged. JAG specialists also follow students and offer support for 12 months after graduation to guide them into meaningful training and/or employment.

Across the country, 93% of JAG students graduate compared to approximately 20-30% of their at-risk peers. Most recently, 79% were in additional training, the military, or a meaningful job within 12 months of graduation. These percentages, with Alaska's student population, could significantly raise our state's graduation rate by re-engaging those who are on the brink of leaving and dropping out.

The \$800,000 request will allow for the hiring of eight or nine graduation specialists in ~~nine~~ different schools across the state, in urban and rural settings, that will impact approximately 360 at-risk students. It will allow for a supervisor to coordinate efforts and trainings, connect with business leaders, and assist with the regular data input that is required for accountability purposes in all JAG programs. It provides funding for the removal of barriers to student success

including helping with identification cards, clothing for interviews, food and gas vouchers, and connections with the proper agencies for support for situations like pregnancies and homelessness. Additionally, trainings for specialists and events for JAG students will be incorporated.