

Excerpts from interviews with 42 Generation Work Opportunity Youth (Employment Pathways)

(Interviewees include 11 young adults from Port Jobs, 11 from ReOpp, 15 from South Seattle College (Georgetown), 2 from Everett-based AMTEC Manufacturing and 3 from RTC student enrollment center/hub).

What are the biggest challenges you face in getting a job?	#/% of students	The text below presents responses (using the words of young adults) to the following question and aligns them with the challenges mentioned: (1) What are the best strategies that help young adults get a job?
Don't know very many employers	30 (71%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need real job leads, and names of people who might be in companies who can refer us – it is who you know. • We need to have good job applications and resumes, and ways to fill in blank areas [years I did not work]. • We need to have a place that keeps us focused on looking for work, sending out lots of job applications. • We need to get information about employers and hints about the information they want to see in resumes, and what to not say. Also, if they are going to give us like drug tests or other tests then it would be good to know and practice those, along with interviewing. • We need paid or unpaid work in companies where we really want to end up working. • If there was a way to earn money part-time and job search part time that would be good. Like we could do some kind of community project part of the day and be in a job search mode the other part – with help identifying companies. The community project would need to be paid so we could survive while we job search. • When we are in school or training we need to get to meet employers so that maybe they will be more likely to want to hire us. • It makes all the difference to know that your case manager or job coach really knows a company, has visited it, can describe it and knows what it is like working there. I don't want to work anywhere that is totally racist or mostly white. I want to know that it is a company that gives women a chance, and promotes women of color. • I think we should narrow down our job search to a few good companies and then go on tours, and meet with employers.
Not sure what kinds of jobs I qualify for	29 (69%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of jobs say if you have credentials they will hire you but they also want you to have experience even though they don't say that as much. So I think we ought to just get those companies out of our mind since they aren't going to hire us, and have a list of companies who are willing to give us a chance to prove ourselves. • I think for every class you take you should have a list of the skills you learn and a list of the types of jobs and companies who want to hire people with those skills. How would I know otherwise? Oh – and a list of the wages that people with those kinds of skills might earn – in beginning jobs. • There are websites to search for jobs but I don't know which are good, and necessarily what to look for that would show that these companies might hire me. Also, sometimes those websites seem to list the same job forever, which seems kind of wrong to me.

<p>Not sure whether I want to continue my education or get a job right away</p>	<p>28 (66%)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need clear career plans that help us decide whether to continue our education or whether to look for work. Part of it is getting financial aid or grants and part of it is what can I afford to do – like do I need to work now or go to school? If I work, will I lose my benefits? If I stay in school for another semester or earn more or different credentials how much more will I earn? I never seem to think about this stuff until it happens to me. For once I want to be the one that makes other things happen. • Job programs need to get into this way of thinking or talking with me. That is where I am finally at [I am 27]. But I don't always have much discipline to figure it out. • My life decisions have never been too there. Like shouldn't you work when the jobs are around, and go to school when they aren't? How do we know which jobs will be done soon with technology? People who work with young adults need to know the answers to this kind of stuff and share them.
<p>Other people have more experience</p>	<p>27 (64%)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seems like I am always going to be looking for work that I could do but that other people have done more of. I need help convincing people that even though that is the case I am the one they should hire. • Young adults who have skills but not work experience need to have an opportunity to work as interns to convince employers. • If other people have more experience how do I get started? I also don't really know how to play up my jobs in any way that sounds good, but I really have done some pretty good things that would never occur to people if they just saw the title "cashier". • I think we should hit up those companies that only promote white people or don't hire local people and force them to give young people a chance. Like call them on their stuff.
<p>Dealing with rejection and not falling back on the jobs I know I can get.</p>	<p>25 (59%)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young adults need to be able to withstand rejection when they apply for jobs, but I don't know. For me it just makes me want to go to what I know I can get. Fast food. Mickey D's or in my home country it was called Mak Kee. We also gotta be able to survive while we wait. Wish we could get like some kind of temporary call center or warehouse jobs while we wait for the jobs we really want. But being not sure just makes me not want to wait too. • People say keep your eye on the prize but for me the prize is paying bills, and having housing. And I can do that with the skills I have, but never have too much so how do you keep focused on wanting more? Probably having a real clear career plan would help.
<p>My criminal background stands in the way</p>	<p>10 (23%)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't think I really know the straight story about what jobs I will never have or be able to get. I know it depends, maybe on what kind of record you have, but maybe you are just jacked no matter what if you have a criminal record. • Young people with criminal records need to know how to sell their new self. • Temporary employment or other kinds of work experience (but gotta be paid) has to be offered to people with criminal backgrounds so they can demonstrate how they have turned the corner. • I made so much more money working out of the mainstream. I keep reminding myself that is not the right thing to focus on, but need more reminders – and need to work in a place that people don't think that way so much. • Men with records get to work as carpenters. I don't like that kind of work, what am I supposed to do? Bank teller? I don't think so! Women who had done time – even just for prostitution get overlooked. Where are the jobs for us? I am not wearing a skimpy outfit and selling coffee.

<p>I am not sure I understand what the pros/cons of being in an apprenticeship are</p>	<p>6 (14%)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs need to explain apprenticeship more. They need to use more online and social media research to talk about apprenticeships. Maybe have peers or near peers – you all know what I mean - same age peeps talking about apprenticeships. • In general programs need to market apprenticeships better. I am going to try to get in one cause my friend is - he said that being in an apprenticeship gave him hope that he could enter a good career without college and learn skills that employers want. He also said you earn wages while you receive training. That is the way I am trying to see my future. He also talked about benefits but did not say much there. • Is it better to be in an apprenticeship or go nonunion? Should I start my own company? I think these kinds of things ought to be put out there more to people like me.
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