



## TAG in Action: Next Generation Zone

As part of its national call to action, **Adolescent Health: Think, Act, Grow**® (TAG), the Office of Adolescent Health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has identified a number of successful strategies for improving adolescent health throughout the country.

### The Goal

Next Generation Zone is a program of the Spokane Workforce Council and serves as a one-stop career center that brings together education, career skills training, and community and employment resources to provide wrap-around support for young people ages 16-24.

### The Game Plan

Located in eastern Washington state, Next Generation Zone brings a trauma-informed approach to helping youth and young adults prepare for and connect to career opportunities. Three key concepts serve as the cornerstone of the center's trauma-informed practice -- safety, predictability, and consistency – and help to create a sense of belonging for the more than 750 young people served each year.

Next Generation Zone understands that meeting essential needs is fundamental to helping youth and young adults achieve overall success in their education and career pursuits. Food and nutrition programs, health and vision screenings, flu shots, parenting education and other support services are made possible through partnerships with agencies such as Second Harvest, Spokane County United Way, and the Providence Foundation. A mental health specialist is available to help with crisis intervention and to offer referrals to community providers. “Whenever there’s a transition, you can lose a young person. By having things in one location, it helps with success,” explained Jessica Clayton, Program and Development Director at the Spokane Workforce Council. One measure of success for Next Generation Zone is being able to re-engage out-of-school youth. During the 2017-2018 school year, 151 young adults received their GED through its on-site classroom.

Next Generation Zone partners with a wide range of employers to create many options for youth to build skills and connect to career pathways. The goal is to prepare youth to succeed in the workplace and to connect them to in-demand industries, such as information technology and healthcare. The average wage for young adults who obtained employment through Next Generation Zone last year was \$12.45 per hour.

### The Winning Ways

Ms. Clayton shares, “Success for us is creating career pathways through apprenticeships and employment. A job for a young person means they can have the freedom and independence to live how they want and to meet their personal goals. Often, the young people we serve are the first in their family to hold a job or gain an education. They are often motivated to create a stable family for their children. They want to be able to buy a home and live independently. It’s a hope for something better. That’s why we offer health services and health education. Health contributes so much to steady employment. Economic stability is more than an income, it’s about opportunity.”

### Learn More

Spokane Workforce Council  
<https://www.NextGenZone.org/>

