

Introduction to the Real Jobs Program

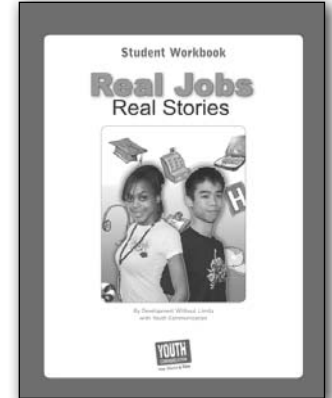
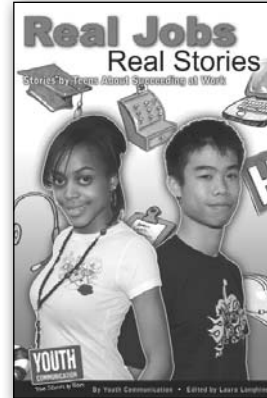
Real Jobs, Real Stories is a work readiness program for teens.* It has four components:

- an anthology of true stories by teens about work and related experiences
- a workbook for teens
- a leader's guide (the book you're holding) with experiential activities
- professional development in how to implement the program with teens.

Real Jobs can be used to help prepare young people for working, to strengthen the skills of teens already on the job, and to help prepare teens for success in managing their lives outside of work. Chapters 1, 2, 6, and 7 focus on job-specific skills, including handling the first day on the job, working with colleagues, developing a professional attitude and approach, exploring careers, and reflecting on the work experience. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 focus on complementary topics: how to manage and save money, how to manage stress, and how to explore options for the future, including higher education.

If teens ask why a work readiness program includes chapters on money, stress, and college, you may want to explain that success on the job is not an isolated event. Long-term career success is directly related to good financial management, good health, and improving one's skills through advanced training.

The *Real Jobs* program is designed to be used in seven three-hour workshops. However,



each workshop consists of many discrete activities. With a little planning, you can break each workshop into two 90-minute workshops, or even three one-hour workshops. You can also extend the number of workshops by taking more time with the activities and going deeper in the discussions.

In reviewing the materials, note that the anthology includes 33 stories by teens about work experiences. Only seven of the stories are paired with activities in the workshops. One feature of the *Real Jobs* program is that it gently encourages teens to get in the habit of reading on their own—an essential skill for success in all but the lowest-level jobs, and for success in school.

We encourage you to announce to the teens that there are many more stories in the anthology than you will be covering in the workshop. They are free to read the other stories on their own and will probably find them interesting and helpful in getting and keeping jobs because the stories are by teens just like them.

For example, the last chapter of the anthology includes stories by teens about working in many different jobs and settings, including retail, fast food, child care, hospitals, and more. Because the stories are by peers and focus on very practical experiences, they are especially compelling, even for teens who are ordinarily resistant to reading.

* *Real Jobs* can be used with teens and young adults in middle school and high school. It can also be used with young adults, ages 18-24, in a work readiness training program, with slight adjustments to a few activities. For example, the college calendar in session 5 is based on typical activities for high school juniors and seniors. If you are working with older youth you can adjust it to their college or other post-secondary training goals and opportunities.

Also note that throughout the program we interchangeably refer to the young people as teens, students, and participants. If you're working with young adults, or out-of-school youth, please use the terms that work for your group.

Finally, you will notice that many of the lessons in the program require teens to complete short worksheets. Teens, especially in out-of-school settings, may be resistant to worksheets, which remind them of busywork in school. However, they will soon see that these worksheets are tied directly to the fun experiential activities. (The worksheets also help reinforce basic writing skills and they support record-keeping and reflection skills, all of which are helpful on the job.)

The lessons also involve moving around the room and interacting with other participants in games, role plays, and other experiential activities. These help teens build the soft skills they need to succeed on the job, and they're fun. Good luck using this program. And have fun!

Leaders: What's in It for You?

If you facilitate the activities in this program or any of the other Real Stories programs (see p. 145) you will become more knowledgeable about youth development and will improve your skills in leading groups.

Each workshop also includes multiple activities, so you will increase your experience facilitating many types of activities. These are transferable skills that are useful in any kind of youth work or teaching, and in the corporate world.

If you successfully lead teens through Real Jobs, you will have run a sophisticated work readiness program that involves reading, discussion, writing, managing groups, and facilitating a wide range of experiential activities. You may want to note that on your next application for a job, internship, or college.

Most importantly, because this program consists of effective stories and activities, you will gain the satisfaction of helping teens improve their knowledge of work and the skills they need to get and keep jobs.

For people who are new to the field or would like to strengthen their facilitation skills, we have provided a wealth of helpful information about running groups later in this section.