



Pictured, left to right: Douglas Wood, Ford Foundation; Brenda Dann-Messier, OVAE; and Amy Solomon, U.S. Department of Justice.  
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## **OVAE Hosts Discussion of Reentry Education Programming**

How can we most effectively use education as a tool to improve prisoner reentry outcomes in the U.S.? OVAE in particular and ED as a whole are committed to providing leadership in using education's potential to address the complementary goals of reducing recidivism, improving public safety, improving life outcomes for individuals involved with the criminal justice system, and saving taxpayer money. Along with education's great potential in this work, we need to ask how and where various educational interventions can be effectively used in our interlocking service systems. And we need to ask what the smartest investment is that we can make for unlocking the human potential in our corrections populations and for supporting the application of this investment to pro-social endeavors.

Attorney General Eric Holder's call for federal agencies to join in prisoner reentry work has brought OVAE's efforts to the fore in ED's response. The most recent among them occurred on Jan. 20, when OVAE Assistant Secretary Brenda Dann-Messier hosted a meeting of an expert panel of criminologists, education administrators, leaders of community-based organizations, correctional officials and formerly incarcerated individuals to examine a draft conceptual model of reentry education programming based on a review of research on reentry. This expert panel was asked if the draft model successfully captured evidence-based principles of effective reentry programming and if it was coherent and practical. In the resulting discussion, the panel agreed that the model was generally successful in applying the relevant evidence-based principles and was coherent and practical. They also recommended, however, that it be made still more practical by emphasizing educational development opportunities, such as literacy instruction, preparation for taking the GED, and CTE instruction. Further, the panel said the model must not be linear because many people in the criminal justice system cycle through different phases before finally re-entering society. Another consistent theme among panel members was that the gap between institutionally based programs and community-based programs must be bridged so that the progress made by many individuals while they are in the system is not lost when they are released. In addition to the subject matter experts, meeting participants included representatives of the Ford, Gates, and Open Society foundations, which are investing in bringing education to bear on the issues of reentry. Models developed by the foundations are being studied by OVAE and its contractor to inform OVAE's work on its draft model, which OVAE will complete and share along with supporting materials this spring.