



OVAE Assistant Secretary Brenda Dann-Messier shows the joint career pathways letter at the April 4, 2012, meeting of state directors of adult education in Washington, D.C.

Pictured, left to right: Brenda Dann-Messier, OVAE; Gerri Fiala, U.S. Department of Labor; Felicia Escobar, White House Domestic Policy Council; Mark Greenberg, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; and Amy Solomon, U.S. Department of Justice.  
Photograph by Paul Wood, U.S. Department of Education.

## **Education, Health and Human Services, and Labor Release Joint Career Pathways Letter**

The Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Labor released on April 4, 2012, a ground-breaking [letter](#) to their many stakeholders, highlighting the agencies' unified commitment to promote the use of career pathways approaches. The term "career pathways" refers to a promising strategy to help adults acquire marketable skills and industry-recognized credentials through the well-executed alignment of education, training and employment, and human and social services among public agencies and with employers, and linking them to labor market trends and employer needs. The joint effort serves as an important model to the field and provides what are held to be the essential components of a career pathways approach. The letter is an opportune vehicle to open doors for state and local efforts currently underway or being planned. The departments encourage stakeholders to use and further disseminate it.

The education and training strategies and support services that are aligned with career pathways enable individuals to secure industry-recognized certification and obtain employment within an occupational area, as well as to advance to higher levels of future education and employment within that area. The departments encourage states to line up their resources to support integrated service delivery across federal and state funding streams, and ensure that interested agencies and partners—whether focused on education, workforce development, or human and social services—are fully aware of this joint commitment for improved collaboration and coordination across programs and funding sources.

Career pathway approaches aid in streamlining otherwise complex and difficult-to-navigate systems by offering an efficient and customer-centered approach to training and education; articulating the necessary adult basic education, occupational training, postsecondary education, and career and academic advising; and, providing supportive services to enter and progress in a career. The more the systems are aligned at the state and local levels, the easier it is to create a level of integration necessary to develop comprehensive programs and ensure an individual's success. State, local and tribal policymakers are encouraged to use career pathways approaches to promote alignment among their public workforce, education, and social and human services systems.

For more information, including the guiding principles for developing comprehensive career pathways systems, as well as for examples of each agency's program investments, evaluation and research activities, and technical assistance efforts, please access the complete [letter and attachment](#).