

Senate Confirms Brenda Dann-Messier As the Department's Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education

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The U.S. Senate has confirmed [Brenda Dann-Messier](#) as the Department's new assistant secretary for vocational and adult education, and she plans to be in her OVAE office as early as Oct. 13. Dann-Messier has served as president of the Providence, RI program [Dorcas Place](#) for the past 10 years. She also served on the RI Board of Governors for Higher Education and the board of the RI Higher Education Assistance Authority. Dann-Messier was the secretary of education's New England regional representative during the Clinton administration. She holds a doctorate in educational leadership from Johnson & Wales University, Providence campus, and a master's degree in instructional technology from Rhode Island College. Photo by Gene St. Pierre

Dorcas Place Adult and Family Learning Center, which she led, is in its 28th year of providing comprehensive adult education programs to low-income Rhode Islanders. The center assists low-income adults in realizing their full potential through literacy training, employment, advocacy and community involvement. Nearly 1,000 students each year are enrolled in day and evening adult basic education, English language learning and GED classes; college transition programs at two campuses of the Community College of Rhode Island; family literacy and after-school programs to enhance the learning gains of children in local elementary schools; and workforce literacy training. The National Coalition for Literacy (NCL) presented a NCL Literacy Leadership Award to Dorcas Place in September 2009 for its contributions to improving literacy and raising literacy awareness. Under Dann-Messier's leadership, Dorcas Place was recognized for promising practices by the New England Literacy Resource Center, the National College Transition Network, the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, the Commission on Adult Basic Education and ProLiteracy America, and *U.S. News and World Report*. The RI Department of Education in February 2009 rated the center as one of the highest performing adult education programs in the state.