

State of Vermont
Vermont Commission on Women
126 State Street
Montpelier, Vermont 05633-6801
women.vermont.gov

[phone]
[toll free]

802-828-2851
800-881-1561

Vermont Commission on Women Meeting Minutes (DRAFT)

Friday, February 16, 2024 | 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

ONLINE ONLY

Commissioners present: Co-Chair Esther Charlestin, Co-Chair Sarah Mell, Brenda Churchill, Nancy Kaplan, Hazel Brewster, Susan Sussman, Sophia Rabe, Wendy Knight, Annie Mackin, Ashley Messier, Kellie Campbell, Linda Joy Sullivan, Kelly-Rue Riso, and Alex Hilliard

Commissioners absent: Heather Bouchey

Advisors present: Katie Salina and Sarah Kenney of Let's Grow Kids; Morgan Crossman and Anna Brouillette of Building Bright Futures.

Staff: Cary Brown and Karen Cygnarowicz

Presiding: Co-Chairs Esther Charlestin and Sarah Mell

Recording: Karen Cygnarowicz

1. Meeting called to order

Meeting called to order at: **9:33 a.m.**

2. Approval of agenda

MOTION made by Hazel, seconded by Susan.

To approve the proposed amended meeting agenda, giving discretion to the chair to deviate from the agenda as necessary.

MOTION APPROVED. Agenda adopted.

3. Review Group Agreements

4. Approval of January 19, 2023 Meeting Minutes

MOTION made by Brenda, seconded by Susan.

To approve the January 2023 minutes as submitted.

MOTION APPROVED. Minutes adopted.

5. Check ins

6. Child Care Update

Sarah Kenney and Katie Salina of Let's Grow Kids shared an update on Act 76, the 2023 child care bill, including touring programs already implementing funds in S. Burlington, Wilmington, and St. Johnsbury, and the implementation of the bill.

State of Vermont**Vermont Commission on Women**

126 State Street
Montpelier, Vermont 05633-6801
women.vermont.gov

[phone]
[toll free]

802-828-2851
800-881-1561

- January, childcare programs receive 35% increase in state reimbursements.
- April, more families become eligible for child care financial assistance.
- July, additional increase in state reimbursements for home-based programs (almost exclusively women), child care contributions begin via payroll tax.
- October, even more families are eligible for child care financial assistance.

The agenda for child care in 2024 is to ensure Act 76 is fully funded and implemented successfully: to improve family affordability, to support early childhood educator recruitment and retention, and to increase child care program quality and capacity.

Let's Grow Kids is participating in Town Meeting Action Week

[Volunteer Opportunities, Events, and Petitions Near Me - Vermont's Child Care Campaign on Mobilize](#)

A commissioner asked: "Are we tracking the increase in salary for our early childhood educators and do employers have choice or strong advisement or mandate in % increases?" AND "As part of increased funding available to families, do caretakers who might be a grandparent or other to our VT children have access to those funds/guidelines?" Sarah Kenney of LGK responds to say: CCFAP supports children who are in care at regulated child care programs. There's also a category of "approved relative child care providers" who can receive CCFAP for the children in their care if they meet certain criteria.

Morgan Crossman and Anna Brouillette of Building Bright Futures shared Vermont's collaborative vision and strategy for monitoring Act 76.

"We asked partners two key questions: What would success look like across each area of legislative intent? And what are the top three things we would need to measure in order to understand the impact across each area of legislative intent?"

Two key ways BBF engaged partners:

- 13 focus group convenings with over 80 partners
- Statewide survey that yielded 79 cross sector responses

At baseline, what do we need to measure? How do we establish all the important things we need to measure, and how to measure over time?

[Act-76-Status-Report.pdf \(vermont.gov\)](#)

There are many mechanisms by which BBF will monitor implementation:

- Research partnership with child trends and CDD
 - o Focus groups and surveys with families and early educators
- CDD's Status and Summary Report Chart
- Partnership with CDD and AOE to support CQI

State of Vermont**Vermont Commission on Women**

126 State Street
Montpelier, Vermont 05633-6801
women.vermont.gov

[phone]
[toll free]

802-828-2851
800-881-1561

- VECAP Committee Meetings
- Making data publicly available at VermontKidsData.org

Synthesize all information, help agencies and partners to prioritize what feels most valuable and use that as a way to communicate.

[Act 76 Indicator Snapshot \(vermontkidsdata.org\)](http://vermontkidsdata.org)

Collected: number of programs, programs opening and closing, licensed and desired capacity, specialized child care, special education, UPK enrollment, CCFAP utilization

Implementation Progress: the first 6 months.

Notable successes to date: timely communication about implementation, namely from the child development division, and programs reported spending funds on expanding capacity, updating facilities, increasing compensation and support for staff, and more from the readiness payment program.

Notable challenges to date: concerns about rate caps, confusion about the current status of UPK, timelines of required legislative reports

7. Committee Updates

Workplace Equity Committee, update shared by Cary Brown

- Equal Pay Visibility campaign – whole month of March (highlight partners & employers, op-ed, video launch, and a social media campaign)
- Equal Pay Compact, dormant the last few years. The Committee suggests: taking a step back, looking at our goals, and how do we want to implement goals. Do we want to continue? What is our capacity?
 - What could we do? Suggestions: a newsletter, in person and online gatherings, leaders in equity and equal pay toolkit, facilitate sharing of best practices, provide ongoing resources, follow up with signers.
 - to update the signers list would be a big lift, that we need support.
 - last year's efforts to update the signers list was productive.
 - reminds us of our year's goals, including to uplift black and brown women. Would it be useful to target large scale employers instead of small businesses? UVM is not on the list, State of Vermont is.
 - how can we measure accountability? Asking for data/reports annually.
 - suggests Xusana Davis for State of Vermont, and then also Vermont Works for Women.
 - Staff and Committee would come up with tasks.

State of Vermont**Vermont Commission on Women**

126 State Street

Montpelier, Vermont 05633-6801

women.vermont.gov[phone]
[toll free]

802-828-2851

800-881-1561

- if not this work, what are the other issues that the committee would work on? What would be more impactful? Opens it up to others.
- reminds us of the public forum in Bennington, asks what Bennington employers have signed the EPC and if we can contact them.
 - Wendy mentions and can be in contact with the SW Chamber of Commerce.

Health Equity Committee, update shared by Hazel Brewster and Sarah Mell

- We still have more questions about free standing birthing centers, need to run the topic through DEI framework, and hope to move it in a direction of creating a policy statement. Still gaps, even in the committee's understanding.
- Continuing the work on menstrual products in school bathrooms.

Housing and Caregiving has not met yet.**8. BREAK****9. Youth Engagement**

Karen presented data collected from the 2022 and 2023 Women Can Do conference, and facilitated a conversation about youth engagement.

10. Staff Updates

Karen requested a working group to update the Legal Rights for Women handbook; Susan, Alex, and Kellie are interested.

Karen also requested support for outreach.

Cary shares an update on our legislative priorities.

11. Commissioner Updates

Alex wrote a book!

Sarah attended a meeting of the Vermont Truth and Reconciliation Commission and encouraged us to attend:

[Meetings | Vermont Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#)

State of Vermont
Vermont Commission on Women
126 State Street
Montpelier, Vermont 05633-6801
women.vermont.gov

[phone]
[toll free]

802-828-2851
800-881-1561

Esther shared the Vermont Council on World's Affairs' International Women's Day event.

[International Women's Day — Vermont Council on World Affairs \(vcwa.org\)](https://www.vcwa.org)

Sarah reminds us to be as inclusive with our language as possible, “not all commissioners and advisors identify as women.”

Alex motioned to adjourn the meeting, Brenda seconded, **12:20 p.m.**