

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
Friday, February 11, 2022 | 8:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.
Remote meeting via video conference

Commissioners present:

Kellie Campbell (Co-chair), Kiah Morris (Co-chair),
Lisa Senecal (Co-chair), Ed Adrian, Nancy Brooks, Lisa
Carlson, Delaney Courcelle, Kerin Durfee, Wendy
Knight, Sarah Mell, Ashley Messier, Kim Nolan, Lisa
Ryan, Heidi Tringe

Advisors present:

Meredith Roberts, ANA Vermont
Katie Salina, Let's Grow Kids
Jessica Barquist, Vermont Network Against Domestic &
Sexual Violence
Alison Lamagna, Vermont Works for Women
Katie Armstrong, Vermont Women in Law Enforcement

Commissioners absent:

Guests: Jessica Nordhaus, Change The Story VT,
Corey Wood and Larry Crist, Vermont Parent Child
Representation Center, Sgt Selena Correa
Staff: Cary Brown, Ellie Lane, Lilly Talbert
Presiding: Kellie Campbell, Kiah Morris, Lisa Senecal
Recording: Ellie Lane

1. Welcome and Introductions

Meeting called to order at 8:30 a.m.

Cary referred to a proposed agenda amendment she sent in advance of the meeting.

Motion made by Heidi, seconded by Sarah.
To amend the agenda as proposed by Cary.

A commissioner asked how this change happened. Kiah shared that Sgt Selena Correa is coming to share her story as a Black woman member of the national guard.

No opposition, the agenda was amended.

2. Approval minutes of January 2022

Motion made by Ashley, seconded by Lisa Ryan.
To approve the minutes as submitted.
No opposition, minutes approved.

3. Announcements

Wendy shared about her new kitten.

Kiah shared that she's accepted the position of Executive Director of Rights and Democracy.

Kim Nolan is carrying forward the racial equity work and will be going down to Alabama to do a retreat around bearing witness, with the goal of taking a larger group of Vermonters there for a retreat in the future.

4. Committee Work

The Economic Security Committee has the proposed age of marriage policy (appended to the minutes), to be voted on today. Cary shared that she submitted the equity assessment tool for the proposal to the House Judiciary Committee and was called in to talk about it with them.

**Motion made by Nancy Brooks, seconded by Delaney Courcelle.
To approve the policy statement as proposed.**

No one opposed, the policy was adopted.

The Criminal Legal System Committee is working on a plan to conduct virtual community-based conversations around the replacement process for the Women’s facility in Vermont. They’ve broken it up into 5 regions of the state, and are developing questions and themes for these conversations, this is really about hearing from the community. Ashley shared that she hopes Commissioners will attend their regional event, and welcome the community, that would be great. The group will be utilizing VCW’s podcast to interview local people.

Sarah shared that the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions has a YouTube channel, and it’s very interesting to watch and hear those conversations.

Sarah, Wendy, and Kim had a conversation about where they believe the Commission is at in terms of Racial Equity work. Sarah observed that there are groups of white people who had done a lot of unlearning, a group that’s not quite as far or just starting out in that journey, a group of white folks who don’t think this is the space for that, and some Black and Brown folks who have been harmed in our space. Sarah thinks we need to define racial equity. If the Commission wants to center racial equity, we need to slow down and only work on racial equity or directly related work. We could agree on some kind of racial equity tool that would help us integrate this, and Sarah would be willing to help us evaluate and implement a tool.

Kerin suggested that Commission should be starting off our meetings with the Abenaki acknowledgment.

Sarah, Wendy, and Kim are ready to hold this group as a Committee to work on.

5. VCW principles/values

Discussion postponed due to time constraints.

6. VT National Guard

Kiah Morris talked about VCW grappling with what our role is in impacting the Vermont National Guard and what is happening for women then. Sgt. Selena Correa has joined us to share with us her experience in the Guard.

7. Vermont Parent Child Representation Center

Corey Wood, Interim Board Chair, and Larry Crist, Executive Director, came to talk to the Commission about their work. It was three years since he last spoke with us, and the system isn’t any better. The system works to the detriment of children and families, and especially to the detriment of women. Three-quarters of the

people they work with are women, and most are economically challenged, and the problems that bring them to DCF's attention are almost always economic.

They asked the Commission on Women to assign one or two people to work in a group who want to work on this system and present a comprehensive reform package to the Vermont Legislature. Ashley, Nancy, and Kerin are interested.

8. Staff Updates

Postponed due to time constraints.

9. Closing

The group held a discussion on meeting dynamics and member conduct.

Meeting Adjourned at 10:58 a.m.

APPENDIX

Proposed Policy

Age of Marriage

The Vermont Commission on Women supports legislation and policies that ensure marriage may only be entered by consenting adults who have reached the age of majority.

Marriage is a binding contract with far-reaching impacts and requires a judicial order to terminate. It is consistent with existing policy and contract law to ensure both parties entering the marriage consent to the marriage and have reached the age of majority.

According to Vermont Department of Health records, 281 Vermonters age 16 – 17 were married between the years of 2000 – 2019, and 84% of those were girls. 48% of those girls married men who were four or more years older than they were.

The United States government recognizes early marriage as a human rights abuse^[1], as do the United Nations,^[2] United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF),^[3] Human Rights Watch,^[4] and the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW),^[5] among others.

Nationally, women who delay marriage until reaching the age of majority are less likely to drop out of high school, more likely to graduate from college, and less likely overall to live in poverty.^[6] Girls who marry before age 18 are much more likely to be physically abused by their spouses^[7] and are also far more likely to divorce.^[8] Girls who marry at age 18 or younger face significantly higher health risks compared to women who marry at 19 or older, including a 23% higher risk of heart attack, diabetes, cancer, and stroke.^[9]

^[1] United States Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/254904.pdf> accessed October 25, 2021

[2] Child, Early and Forced Marriage, Including in Humanitarian Settings, OHCHR, 2021, www.ohchr.org/en/issues/women/wrgs/pages/childmarriage.aspx.

[3] Child Marriage, UNICEF, accessed March 7, 2021, www.unicef.org/protection/child-marriage.

[4] Child Marriage, Human Rights Watch, access March 7, 2021, www.hrw.org/topic/womens-rights/child-marriage.

[5] Child Marriage Archives - ICRW: Passion. Proof. Power, International Center for Research on Women, www.icrw.org/issues/child-marriage/.

[6] Yann Le Strat, MD, et al., Child Marriage in the United States and Its Association with Mental Health in Women, Pediatrics, September 2011, Vol. 128 / Issue 3, <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/128/3/524>

[7] *Id.*

[8] Tim B. Heaton, Factors Contributing to Increasing Marital Stability in the United States, Journal of Family Issues, Vol. 23, 392, 407 (2002), <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0192513X02023003004>.

[9] Fraidy Reiss, Why can 12-year-olds still get married in the United States?, Washington Post, February 10, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2017/02/10/why-does-the-united-states-still-let-12-year-old-girls-getmarried/?utm_term=.c039f3179840.