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VIEW

Vermont Information Exchange for Women

Newsletter



December 30th, 2020

News & Resources

VCW hosts Legislative After Dinner Coffee & Conversation: A conversation about the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on January 14th!

Join us for [a panel discussion to learn more about how COVID-19 impacts Vermont women, and especially those experiencing the intersection of gender and race, and what policymakers can do about it.](#)

The pandemic continues to have devastating consequences, exposing long-standing structural inequities that can no longer be ignored. We face the prospect that decades of progress for women and people of color may be undone, and at the same time, we note a receptiveness to change, and a unique and urgent opportunity to rebuild broken systems for a Vermont that truly works for everyone.

Attendees will engage in breakout sessions, exploring these issues and solutions in small, geographically based breakout rooms. The event closes with a Q&A session and the opportunity for discussion as a larger group.

Policymakers, state officials, advocates, and members of the public are welcome and encouraged to attend.

Welcome New Commissioners Kiah Morris and Kerin Durfee!

The Vermont Commission on Women is thrilled to welcome Kiah Morris of Bennington and Kerin Durfee of Burlington, both recently appointed by the Speaker of the House Mitzi Johnson.



Kerin Durfee is the Director of Earned Revenues and Guest Services at ECHO, Leahy Center for Lake Champlain, a Lake Aquarium and Science Center that focuses on STEM education, lake health and workforce development. In her current role, she provides senior leadership, overseeing the museum’s retail, event and customer service operations. Commissioner Durfee holds a Master of Business Administration from Norwich University. She is a member of the national chapter of the NAACP and serves on the Burlington police commission.

Kiah Morris served as a State Representative from 2014-2018. She is an award-winning, in-demand trainer, speaker, and presenter, as well as an accomplished actress, spoken word performer, singer, dancer, and arts manager. Commissioner Morris currently serves as the Movement Politics Director for Rights and Democracy Vermont and is an Oxfam America Sisters on the Planet Ambassador, as well as an advisory council member of Emerge Vermont and Black Lives Matter Vermont.

[Read more about Kerin and Kiah on our website.](#)

Vermont Commission on Women Executive Director Cary Brown M'10 on the continued pay gap for women, glass ceilings, glass cliffs, and the transformative power of Generation Z | Norwich Record

"Norwich alumnae Cary Brown has served the commission for the past 13 years, first as a commissioner and, since 2012, as the agency's executive director. Brown recently spoke with the Record about the disparities women continue to face in today's workforce, ways to address those inequities, and her optimism for the next generation of Norwich women graduates." – [Sean Markey for the Norwich Record](#)

Data Brief Illuminates COVID-19 Disparities for BIPOC Vermonters | VT Department of Health

Vermonters who are Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) represent 6% of the state's population but 18% of our COVID-19 cases. A new data brief delves deeper into how BIPOC Vermonters have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, due to systemic and structural racism affecting the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, and work. Read the [full data brief from the Department of Health](#).

Vermont Department of Health Vaccine Information Page

Important, up-to-date, and reliable information about the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccines is available from the Vermont Department of Health at healthvermont.gov/covid-19/vaccine.

Please participate in a national research study on Socioeconomic Impacts of COVID-19 on US Households | University of Massachusetts

You are invited to participate in a [national research study on Socioeconomic Impacts of COVID-19 on US Households, conducted by a research team of the University of Massachusetts Department of Economics and School of Public Policy](#).

This anonymous online survey takes ~15 minutes to complete and includes questions on professional life, economic stability, physical and mental well-being, as well as childcare and children's education. You are free to skip any questions that you choose, and you may leave the survey at any point. Survey results will include an analysis of each State's responses, including Vermont's! We're coming together to determine solutions to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Your input will help policymakers understand what COVID-19 supports are most important.

Request for Proposals: Online Course Developer | Vermont Works for Women

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and to make services accessible to a broader audience of women across Vermont, [Vermont Works for Women is looking to transition their existing Employment and Career Services curriculum and materials to an online platform](#). The curriculum, which includes lessons on resume/cover letter building, job interview skills, personal financial literacy, etc., was previously taught in-person in a cohort model. Existing materials need to be reviewed and adapted to fit the features of an online learning platform. Additional content, such as videos, will need to be developed with program staff to ensure the content is engaging for an online audience. Proposals should be submitted to info@vtworksforwomen.org by 1/15/20.

State of Working Vermont 2020 | Public Assets Institute

The Public Assets Institute released a new report, [State of Working Vermont 2020](#), with a focus on the impacts of the pandemic.

Constitutional amendments on abortion and slavery could wait until 2022 | VTDigger

"Two proposals to change the Vermont Constitution must be voted on during the next two years by both the state House and Senate, but as lawmakers prepare for a session dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the economic downturn, the amendments may wait for a year." – [Kit Norton for VTDigger](#)

Report documents pattern of sexual abuse at Vermont's only prison for women | VTDigger

"A monthslong investigation into sexual misconduct at the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility uncovered a 'disturbing degree' of abuse at the women's prison, a year after Seven Days reported the allegations.

The Vermont Agency of Human Services contracted the law firm Downs Rachlin Martin to conduct the probe after the initial allegations caused an outcry last December. The firm released a 60-page summary of its findings on Wednesday.

While the investigation did not offer conclusions on the veracity of any particular allegation, it did find that reports of chronic sexual abuse at the facility were "largely accurate," Tristram Coffin, the director of Downs Rachlin Martin and a former U.S. Attorney, said at a press conference Wednesday. It also found more limited instances of substance abuse by staff at the South Burlington prison.

'It would have been of significant concern if DRM had encountered even one allegation of sexual misconduct involving a staff member and a resident,' the report reads. 'Instead, DRM encountered many such allegations.'

Through a review of personnel files and months of interviews with prison staff and residents, investigators said they discovered an "extremely troublesome" pattern of misconduct. The report documents incidents of sexual abuse perpetrated by

corrections officers both against residents and against fellow employees."- [Katya Schwenk for VTDigger](#)

Health concerns linger at women's prison after judge declines to act on unsanitary conditions | VTDigger

"In a ruling last week, a Vermont Superior Court judge dismissed complaints brought by a woman incarcerated at the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility about unsanitary conditions in the prison's showers....'It's very hard to get courts to grant prisoners relief from conditions that I think the public wouldn't accept if they were aware of them,' said Kelly Green, a defense attorney with Vermont's Prisoner's Rights Office who represented Conte at trial." - [Katya Schwenk for VTDigger](#)

Ashley Messier & Karen Tronsgard-Scott talk about the Conditions at Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility on IndigoRadio

[Indigo host Anna Mullany spends the hour](#) with Ashley Messier from the Women's Justice and Freedom Initiative and Karen Tronsgard-Scott of the VT Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. Ashley and Karen talk about the conditions and abuses at Chittenden correctional facility - the only women's facility in the state; abolition vs reform; intimate partner violence; restorative justice; and how community can get involved to make change.

Uplift Vermont Campaign | Vermont Network Against Domestic & Sexual Violence

The VT Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence has launched a new campaign, Uplift VT, envisioning a future in which everyone is free from violence.

[Share the campaign, join the conversation, and find how you can play a role.](#)

New Vermont Addiction Recovery Program Set to Expand Services | NECN

A new sober living facility, [Jenna's House](#), opened recently in Lamoille county for women who have complex histories of trauma seeking recovery. Sober housing, treatment services, a support community, and an innovative work program that provides job skills are part of the wrap-around services offered. The Tatro family began Jenna's Promise in 2019 after the tragic loss of their daughter to substance use disorder. Inspired by their daughter's spirit and her desire to help, [this project "was created to combat this disease and help those who are struggling with addiction and their families heal."](#)

BIPOC Business Survey Preliminary Results | Vermont Partnership for Fairness & Diversity

Vermont Partnership for Fairness & Diversity released the preliminary results of its BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) Business Survey. Seventy-five (75) BIPOC business owners from ten counties operating in thirteen different business sectors completed the survey. [Survey results, findings, and recommendations are posted to the Vermont Partnership website.](#)

The survey was designed to gauge interest in the creation of an entity to serve the needs of BIPOC business owners in Vermont. Sixty-two percent (62%) of BIPOC business owners responding to the survey were not members of a chamber of commerce or business association. Over three quarters (76%) felt a need for a government commission to promote and support the growth of BIPOC businesses. Access to capital ranked highest on the list of priorities for BIPOC business owners, followed by the need for a mutual support network.

Vermont Conversation: Covid's impact on kids and families |

VTDigger

David Goodman talks with Sarah Teel, research director, Voices for Vermont Children, Faye Mack, advocacy & education director, Hunger Free Vermont, and Erhard Mahnke, coordinator, Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition [about the impact of COVID-19 on Vermont's children and families.](#)

The Mend Podcast: Season 2 | Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services

Episode 1 features Mary C. Ashcroft, Esq. discussing the Vermont Bar Association Legal Access and Pro Bono program. Watch [Season 2, Episode 1](#) or listen to [Season 2, Episode 1.](#)

In episode 2, host Anna Nasset interviews Suzanne Isaza about Incest Awareness. Suzanne, founder of the Sexual Assault Advocacy Network, is a Child Sexual Abuse/Incest Awareness Leader. Watch [Season 2, Episode 2](#) or listen to [Season 2, Episode 2.](#)

State data shows frequent use of psych patient restraints |

VTDigger

"Restraint and seclusion are used just as frequently on psychiatric patients who choose to get inpatient mental health care at the Brattleboro Retreat as those who go to the hospital involuntarily. It's the first time the state has collected use-of-force data for voluntary patients, who make up about two-thirds of Vermont's mental health patients. Between Oct. 1 and Nov. 9, Brattleboro Retreat employees restrained, secluded or forcibly medicated voluntary patients 79 times. That's compared to 86 instances with involuntary patients." – [Katie Jickling for VTDigger](#)

New data shows Burlington police used force against Black individuals at record rate in 2020 | VTDigger

"In total, the Burlington police used force against 149 people in the first 10 months of 2020. That figure is lower than in previous years, continuing an apparent downward trend in the number of use-of-force incidents — but arrests and calls for service have been far fewer in 2020, which officials attribute in part to the pandemic. Of the 149 people who were subjected to force, more than 28% were Black. Black residents comprise only 6% of Burlington's population, according to last year's Census Bureau estimates. The disproportionality of that rate is higher than any recorded in the past eight years. Between 2017 and 2019, about 26% of subjects of police use of force each year were Black; in 2012, it was 18%." - [Katya Schwenk for VT Digger](#)

'Not The Problem Of The Oppressed': Incoming Rutland NAACP President Talks Priorities, Exposure | VPR

The Rutland branch of the NAACP will soon have new leadership. Mia Schultz is poised to take over as president of the organization, as its founding leader, Tabitha Moore steps down. The NAACP has advocated for civil rights nationally since 1909, but the Rutland branch has been in operation for just about four years. It boasts 550 members, making it the second largest chapter in New England. In addition to her new role, Mia Schultz is also on the board of the advocacy group Rights & Democracy and is the chair of the Bennington Town Democratic Party. [VPR's Henry Epp spoke with Mia Schultz about her priorities as she moves into her new position with the Rutland NAACP.](#)

DPS invites feedback on statewide draft use-of-force policy | Vermont Business Magazine

The Vermont Department of Public Safety is continuing to accept public and stakeholder feedback on Vermont's initiative to modernize policing across Vermont. The latest document available for public review is a draft Statewide Policy on Police Use of Force. The policies, along with the newly posted draft Statewide Policy on Police Use of Force, are available for review at <https://dps.vermont.gov/modernization> DPS asks the public to submit any feedback prior to Jan. 6, 2021.

Proposed fund would help Black, Indigenous and people of color buy property | VTDigger

"White people own most of the land in the state, said Steffen Gillom, president of Windham County Vermont NAACP. Only eight farms in Vermont are fully owned by Black people, according to the American Farmland Trust.

Community leaders of color are about to ask the Legislature to establish a fund to help Black, Indigenous and people of color to buy a home, land, or a farm. Gillom has worked with Rep. Brian Cina, P-Burlington, and Kenya Lazuli, cofounder of Radical Imagination, among others, to draft the proposal." – [Amanda Gokee for VTDigger](#)

New KIDS COUNT report identifies critical priorities for Vermont's pandemic response | Annie E. Casey Foundation

[Kids, Families and COVID-19: Pandemic Pain Points and a Roadmap for Recovery](#), a new national report of recent household data from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, was released today. Based on data from the US Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey, the report's findings illustrate the compounding impacts of the pandemic crisis on the lives of children and families and highlight the need for decisive action from policymakers that prioritizes equitable solutions to help families survive the

catastrophe.

Poll: Vermonters Support More State Funding For Child Care | VPR

“A new poll commissioned by one of the state’s leading child care advocacy organizations shows broad public support for increased state funding for Vermont’s child care system. Aly Richards, CEO of Let’s Grow Kids, says the coronavirus pandemic has presented the most compelling case yet for new public investments in Vermont’s child care infrastructure. And she said a survey of 500 Vermonters conducted last month indicates the public is on board with increased state appropriations. The poll found that 78% of respondents favor increasing state funding to ensure ‘there are enough affordable, high-quality child care programs in Vermont for children under age five.’” – [Peter Hirschfeld for VPR](#)

Bridging the Skills Gap: Career and Technical Education in High School | U.S. Department of Education

[The Department of Education has released a data story](#) exploring access to and participation in career and technical education (CTE) in high school, as well as outcomes of students who concentrate studies in CTE. The data shows that female students and students of color are less likely to participate in CTE, and less likely to concentrate in CTE. Vermont has lower than average CTE concentrations in high school, compared to other states.

Windows to a Multicultural World K-12 Remote Learning Program | Clemmons Family Farm

The Clemmons Family Farm Pilots Window 1: Traveling While Black January 15 – February 14. [Interested K-12 teachers, parents, and high school students can sign](#)

[up, selected participants will be able to access the platform for free, and participants who complete all activities will receive a \\$100 stipend.](#)



Change The Story Commentary Series in VT Digger

provided by Vermont Works for Women

Alison Lamagna: What women really want for the holidays: a better future

“What we need is a total paradigm shift in how we value work. We need policies and economic recovery plans that center women and essential workers as the backbone of our economy. Recently, a New York Times article described a new law in New Zealand that utilizes the concept ‘comparable worth.’ This is not exactly a new idea and there are examples in Canada and the U.S., but the concept has lost traction in the last couple of decades.”

[Read Alison’s commentary in the VT Digger.](#)

Upcoming Events

What is Child Sexual Abuse? | Prevent Child Abuse Vermont

Thursday, January 7, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Examining Bias and Interrupting Systemic Patterns of Educational Injustice to Support Anti-Racist School Communities | Vermont Higher Education Collaborative

Wednesdays, January 6 & 13, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.

The State of Vermont's Young Children and Families

Monday, January 11, 1:30 p.m.

Racism in America Forum Series 2020-2021 Focus on Vermont - "The Meeting"

Wednesday, January 13, 7:00 p.m.

Policing & Mental Health | League of Women Voters of Vermont & Kellogg-Hubbard Library

Wednesday, January 13, 7:00 p.m.

A New Year – Seven steps to re-focus on mental health in 2021 with Dr. Lynn Bursell | Vermont Department of Health

Thursday, January 14, 9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Legislative After Dinner Coffee & Conversation: A conversation about the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 | Vermont Commission on Women

Thursday, January 14, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Training of Trainers – TECHNICOOL: Keeping Kids Safe on the Internet | Prevent Child Abuse Vermont

Tuesday – Thursday, January 19 – 21, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Nurturing Healthy Sexual Development | Prevent Child Abuse Vermont

Tuesday, January 26, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Overcoming Barriers to Protecting Children from Sexual Abuse | Prevent Child Abuse Vermont

Wednesday, January 27, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

9to5: The Story of a Movement | Vermont PBS (feat. VCW's Cary Brown and VWW's Rhoni Basden)

Thursday, January 28, 6:30 p.m.



We choose events for VIEW from our [statewide events calendar](#) for women and girls. **If you'd like your event featured in the VIEW**, make sure you [add it](#).

Looking for more? You'll find many more events for women & girls in Vermont on the calendar.



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The Vermont Commission on Women (VCW) is a non-partisan state agency advancing rights and opportunities for women and girls. Sixteen volunteer commissioners, along with representatives from organizations concerned with women's issues, guide VCW's public education, coalition building, and advocacy efforts. For more information, please visit us at <http://women.vermont.gov>.

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