

**Vermont Commission on Women
Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, February 10, 2016

Pavilion Office Building, 4th floor conference room, 109 State Street, Montpelier, VT

Commissioners present:

In person: Gretchen Bailey, Ruth Finn,
By phone: Eileen Boland, Laine Dunham,
Jennie Gartner, Colin Ryan, Kerry Secrest

Commissioners absent:

Marcia Merrill (Chair), Carol Buchdahl,
Charlotte Dennett, Cathy Frey, Susie
Hudson, Nancy LaVarnway, Danielle
Martel, Melinda Moulton, Lynn
Batchelor

Advisors present:

Becky Raymond of Building Bright Futures (by phone)
Anne Burmeister of Planned Parenthood of Northern New England
Marybeth Redmond of Vermont Works for Women (by phone)

Guests: Wendy Love, Interns Caroline Keller and Alexis Zona

Staff: Cary Brown, Hannah Myers, Lilly Talbert

Presiding: Cary Brown

Recording: Hannah Myers

Meeting called to order at 9:43 a.m.

Welcome/Introductions: Cary welcomed everyone and asked them to introduce themselves.

Staff/event updates:

Legislative Updates:

H.187: there was discussion about who should be included as employees, as well as the definition of biological families. Some legislators expressed concerns about contracting companies and whether they would also have to comply with the paid leave requirements. They discussed how to allot hours of leave to different kinds of employees, and how to determine who is considered "part time", etc.

School discipline: they were discussing prevention vs. reactionary discipline, including community service, counseling, and social engagement, and ensuring students understand the impact of their behavior on others.

H. 808, a bill relating to accommodations for pregnant workers: would require employers in Vermont to provide reasonable accommodations to pregnant workers, such as extra or longer bathroom breaks, a chair or stool, ability to have a water bottle or increased breaks for water, etc. Currently, accommodations needed during a healthy, normal pregnancy are not protected by the ADA. Lilly is collecting stories from women who have worked in Vermont while pregnant, and Cary will be testifying on this bill tomorrow.

There are two bills regarding gender balance. One requires the governor to consider gender balance when making appointments (H.464), and the other prohibits appointments that would throw a board out of gender balance (H.708).

H. 749 is in committee, this is a bill which would allow minors 16 & 17 years old to obtain protective orders against sexual and dating partners without their parent filing on their behalf, and would allow other minors to have access to protective orders through a Next Friend adult who could file on their behalf in lieu of a parent or guardian. Presently only a parent or guardian can ask for a protective order on behalf of a minor of any age.

Anne Burmeister updated the Commission on the access to contraception bill (H.620). It may be taken off the wall next week, and hopefully will have a hearing date soon.

Staff Updates:

Our Department of Labor, Paid Family Leave Feasibility Study grant is still in the approval process, we intend to issue one comprehensive RFP for the whole study.

Regarding our FY2017 budget, Cary testified before the House appropriations committee, and we do not yet know if we will be called to the Senate.

Events:

Women, Poverty & Justice, Monday, March 7th at 8:00 a.m. at Main Street Landing, generously provided by Melinda Moulton. The event is focused on homelessness and housing issues, and will feature a panel including:

Jan Demers, Executive Director, Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity
Kirby Dunn, Executive Director, HomeShare Vermont
Rita Markley, Executive Director, Committee on Temporary Shelter (COTS)
Karen Richards, Executive Director, Vermont Human Rights Commission

The Women's History Month Event is taking place Thursday, March 24, 2016 at 7:00 pm at the Green Mountain Club Headquarters, Route 100, Waterbury, Vermont. We'll hear from Reidun Nuquist about Green Mountain Girls: Women of the Long Trail.

Equal Pay is Tuesday April 12th, and will be our replacement April business meeting- at the usual time and in the Ethan Allen room in the State House. We will be meeting with the Governor at the State House, as he signs the proclamation.

Child Protection Services discussion - Wendy Love, Guardian ad Litem:

Wendy discussed her experiences as a guardian ad litem and answered questions. People wanted to know: Is it a negative or a positive that we have district differences? Beyond the drug problem, what other factors are you seeing influence the increase of children entering the system. Is there a need for more guardians ad litem? What are the weak spots you see in the pipeline?

Unintended pregnancy in VT - Kim Swartz, VT Department of Health

Kim Swartz presented and shared a power point presentation: Preventive Reproductive Health: An Overview of Priorities, outlining the Vermont Department of Health's objectives in relation to unintended pregnancy: increase the percent of pregnancies that are intended; increase the percent of women who have health care; improve the rate of screening, response, and referrals related to domestic violence, especially in the home visiting context, including screening for reproductive health; and increase the percent of youth who use contraception and receive education about STDs.

Highlights from her presentation include that:

In Vermont, 50.3% of pregnancies are planned, the Healthy Vermonters 2020 goal is 65%. Unintended pregnancy includes mistimed or unwanted pregnancies. Unintended pregnancies are associated with poor health outcomes. In Vermont, 74% of unintended pregnancies are publically funded, and cost the state 30 million annually. The rate of intended pregnancy is highest for women aged 25-34, at 60.4%, and is lowest at 19% among 15-19 year olds.

The abortion rate is tending downward. Teen pregnancy rate has been declining, 14% of this decrease is attributable to a decrease in teen sexual activity, 86% is attributable to increased access to contraceptives. Our teen birth rate is still much higher than other countries.

Typically, women are presented with a menu of contraceptive options, the birth control pill had been the default recommendation. The new tiered counseling approach is highlighting the effectiveness of the contraceptives.

The age of first sex has changed minimally over time, but there is a much longer period of time between age of first sex and having the first child. LARCs are easy to use, they are more effective. The National Organization supporting a new approach supporting LARCs. Resources for more information include: [Bedsidder](#), [Beyond the Pill](#), [OneKeyQuestion](#), and the [Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](#).

What is Vermont doing well to have a higher rate of teen use of birth control at last sex above national average?

We're in line with NH, NY, and many others, the U.S. average is low because it includes states with very high rates of teen pregnancy and birth. Teens are getting information from sex ed at school, the curriculum varies widely across the state, from nurses and guidance counselors, parent child centers, parents, planned parenthood messaging, both in clinics and social media, peer education initiative, peer influence, and friendship circles.

Equal Pay Compact - Kelly Walsh

Kelly worked for VWW for 6 years, and now is spending 5 hours a week on the Equal Pay Compact, which is a voluntary online pledge any employer in Vermont can sign on to. Kelly is hoping Commissioners (and advisors) can think about the businesses in their communities or that they have connections to who might be able to sign on. Kelly will send out a survey monkey form, that would give Kelly the business, contact information, etc. and if you've had a contact, to let her know, and the intended next steps. Commissioners can contact businesses directly, or ask Kelly to do so. We're looking for a large spread in the types of businesses that are signing on to the compact, including small

mom and pop businesses, as well as larger businesses that employ a large number of Vermonters and women. Kerry Secrest suggested that we use Equal Pay Day as a way to announce businesses that have signed on to the compact. We'd like a good initiative before then so we have a number we can be proud of.

Marybeth suggested that we highlight the businesses on social media. Kelly is also hoping that businesses will also provide a quote we can use about why this is important that we can use on the website or on social media. Kelly will send out the survey to everyone.

Announcements

Chris Curtis not coming today, but materials were e-mailed out and if you have questions, you can reach out to Cary.

Meeting adjourned at 12:04 p.m.