



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
DRAFT Meeting Minutes NOT YET APPROVED
Friday, November 12th, 2021 | 8:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.
Remote Meeting via video and teleconferencing

Commissioners present:

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

Commissioners absent:

Lisa Carlson

Advisors present:

Meredith Roberts, ANA Vermont
Taylor Hughey, Vermont Early Childhood Advocacy
Alliance
Katie Salina, Let's Grow Kids
Jessica Barquist, Vermont Network Against Domestic
& Sexual Violence
Katie Armstrong, Vermont Women in Law
Enforcement
Lisa Falcone, Mercy Connections
Michelle Fay, Voices for Vermont's Children

Guests: Al Johnson-Kurts, Change The Story
Vermont, Rep. Carol Ode

Staff: Cary Brown, Ellie Lane, Lilly Talbert

Presiding: Kellie Campbell, Kiah Morris, & Lisa
Senecal

Recording: Ellie Lane

1. Welcome and Opening

Meeting called to order at 8:32 a.m.

Kiah Morris welcomed everyone and asked folks to introduce themselves, telling the group the story of our names.

2. Racial Equity Work

Kiah led the group in racial equity work and shared a PowerPoint presentation covering racism, white supremacy, white supremacy culture, and implicit bias. The group watched and responded to a video about implicit bias.

3. VCW Principles/values

Agenda item postponed due to time.

4. Child Marriage

Cary shared that we expect there to be a bill in the legislature in January to ban child marriage, the marriages of people under 18 years old. We've shared a draft VCW policy with you all, which we will vote on at our next meeting.

Rep. Carol Ode joined the Commission meeting to talk about child marriage, to share a bit about this with us. Carol shared that states across the country have passed legislation to eliminate loopholes that allow adults to enter minors into marriage, and countries across the globe are taking part in the initiative under the United Nations Global initiative Goals. Minors in Vermont can be entered into marriage with parental consent. Carol shared statistics about the incidence of child marriage in Vermont, and Lilly shared a link to [VCW's issue brief on child marriage](#). Carol Ode spoke to the concern that minors can be forced and coerced into marriages by their parents.

Rep. Ode shared that Unchained at Last, a national organization working to end child marriage, has been supporting her with this legislation in Vermont. She said that child marriage is a human rights abuse, and shared some of the health and economic consequences of early and forced marriage. Child marriage undermines reproductive rights and increases the rates of unwanted pregnancies and STIs.

Some of the points raised in discussion included:

- Question about the national statistics on this, curious about the national statistics and the racial and ethnic statistics. She is thinking about African Muslim women, and religious groups, and the complication of that. What about teen pregnancy, and teens who want to get married in those circumstances? Rep. Ode shared that AALV has been supportive of this proposal.
- Question about the intersections of this bill with Vermont's consent laws and raised some concern about Planned Parenthood and ACLU opposed this in California. Wondering about the ways in which child marriage could be used to emancipate themselves and escape harmful circumstances.
- Question about the cultural beliefs about marriage, the reasons for the marriage, the view of children who have gotten married, studies about the children of people who were married as minors.
- Wondering if, while our society links certain privileges to marriage, a wholesale prohibition is the right approach. What about judicial review processes? The clear concern is that the child doesn't need to consent to the marriage.
- Concerned about arguments about reproductive consent. Rep. Ode added that marriage is a contract and can be delayed. Abortion is healthcare, and can't be delayed without denying the right.
- Question about the age of the people minors are marrying, as it's different to marry someone close in age compared to someone much older. Cary will share that, and it's in VCW's policy brief.

5. Committee structure proposal

Kellie shared that she's been talking with many Commissioners one-on-one, and is scheduling conversations with some others to get feedback about the Committee structure, what's working, and get ideas. Kellie appreciated the thoughtful and helpful conversations she's had. As part of those conversations, the structure of Committees has been a focus, and she wants to talk about Committee structure proposals.

Three standing committees proposed, based on VCW priorities for the coming year:

- 1) Women in the Criminal Legal System
- 2) Sexual Assault and Gender Equity in the National Guard
- 3) Economic Equity and Security (with several possible sub-focus areas)
 - a. COVID impact and recovery
 - b. Equal pay
 - c. Paid family and medical leave
 - d. Child marriage
 - e. Spousal support and maintenance

Kellie invited feedback. A question was asked about including child care as a sub-focus for economic equity. Cary offered that these can be expanded by the group, based on what's happening.

The group divided into three breakout groups, one for each committee, to begin planning for their meetings.

6. Approval minutes of June, September, October 2021

Motion, minutes passed with no objection.

Meeting Adjourned at 10:31 a.m.