



## Lending Our Voice

**Vermont Works for Women (VWW) has over 30 years of experience helping women and girls recognize their potential and explore, pursue and excel in work that leads to economic independence. Our vision for the future is for Vermont to rethink and remeasure the value of work typically done by women and eliminate gender barriers to employment, to create equitable economic opportunities and outcomes for all.**

**In 2021, VWW is calling for change in the systems and structures surrounding women's employment; career pathways for youth; child care; and community re-entry services for women involved in the criminal justice system.**

### EMPLOYMENT

Workplace flexibility is a simple, low-cost strategy to recruit and retain women in the workplace, and close the leadership gap among men and women. It allows employees to achieve a better work/life balance and manage unforeseen scheduling conflicts, such as a child care emergency, and benefits the employer by increasing employee productivity, engagement, and retention.

Women are leaving the workforce at 4x the rate of men during the COVID-19 pandemic, largely due to the conflicting demands of child care, remote schooling and work. Stepping away from work, even temporarily, can negatively impact women's economic independence.

- **VWW calls on Vermont employers to increase flexibility in their workplaces to better support working families, and recruit and retain female employees.**

*VWW offers gender equity trainings and consultations for employers to help them improve their human resources policies and provides tools and strategies to create an inclusive work environment and attract and retain diverse employees.*

### CAREER PATHWAYS

Female, gender non-conforming, and BIPOC youth occupy a small portion of students enrolled in non-traditional programs at Vermont career and technical education (CTE) centers. According to Change The Story, the number of VT female students completing non-traditional programs has remained between 5 - 14 percent since 2009, except for law enforcement.

- **Vermont must strengthen pathways to careers in STEM and the trades for girls, gender non-conforming, and BIPOC youth. Gender and racially equitable recruitment, programming and career guidance in schools can reduce occupational segregation and grow VT's workforce in these high-demand fields.**

*VWW provides girls and gender non-conforming youth in VT with opportunities to explore career fields underrepresented by their gender and interact with diverse role models through career exploration conferences, afterschool programs and summer camps, and programs that work directly with tech centers. These career exploration opportunities, plus gender equity trainings around how to create inclusive spaces, are available to all schools across the state.*

## CHILD CARE

With women providing the majority of unpaid and paid caregiving, a lack of employment supports for working families - namely paid family leave and an affordable, accessible child care system - disproportionately impacts women's economic independence. Women should not have to choose between caring for their families and keeping their jobs.

- **VWW calls on the State to pass universal paid family and medical leave, as laid out by the Vermont Family and Medical Leave Insurance Coalition (VT FaMLI).**
- **VWW supports the creation of a child care system that is accessible, affordable, high-quality and accountable, as laid out in Let's Grow Kids' policy agenda.**

*VWW supports women to find employment that best meets their needs. With our employment and career services, our staff coach clients to find work, advance in their careers, and overcome systemic barriers, such as a lack of affordable child care, to become economically independent. In 2020, VWW served 100 women. Please contact VWW for participant stories regarding the impact of child care on employment.*

## RE-ENTRY SERVICES

Justice-involved women, due to their gender and other intersecting factors, face tremendous barriers to economic independence after being released from Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility (CRCF).

- **State-funded gender, race and trauma-responsive re-entry services and supports for women leaving incarceration are essential to their successful reintegration into the community.**
- **VT must increase the availability of transitional housing, with wraparound supports, for women.**
- **VWW calls on the Vermont Department of Corrections (DOC) to proactively provide state-issued IDs to women pre-release, thereby eliminating one of the major barriers for women seeking employment.**

*Since 2001, VWW has partnered with the DOC to provide work-readiness services. Women can begin accessing our career resource center and personalized career coaching while incarcerated at CRCF. Post release, VWW continues to support women with navigating the job search process, problem solving obstacles, and accessing supports. In 2020, VWW supported 128 justice-involved women, including 41 with re-entry services.*

Vermont Works for Women recognizes that, in addition to gender, many factors shape the lived experiences of individuals in Vermont, including, but not limited to, race, religion, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, national origin, ethnicity, ability, age, and socioeconomic status. These factors intersect and overlap to create unique personal identities, some of which can greatly amplify the barriers and challenges that women face.

Vermont Works for Women is committed to supporting policies that both include the voices and address the diverse needs of Vermont women, particularly those from marginalized communities.

Please contact VWW for testimony, participant stories, or shared expertise in any related matters.



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