

Permanent Commission on the Status of Women

Facts about the State's leading force for women's equality

1. Why was the PCSW created?

In 1973, recognizing that women had not achieved equality, Connecticut's General Assembly established the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) to identify issues affecting the status of women and to provide leadership and information to policy-makers, the business community, non-profits, the media and the public.

2. Why should PCSW's work matter to me?

Our work touches the lives of all Connecticut women. Ask yourself:

- *Who worked to ensure that women had access to mammograms, regardless of financial status?*
- *Whose training raises awareness of— and helps prevent -- sexual harassment in the workplace?*
- *Whose initiatives resulted in a bill to protect a woman from being fired because she becomes pregnant?*
- *Who provides cutting-edge public policy research to legislators seeking to make the most informed vote?*

The PCSW is the answer to all these questions, and many more. Our work supports a woman's economic security, health and safety throughout her lifespan and helps eliminate gender-based discrimination.

3. What are the PCSW's priority areas?

- *Economic and Financial Security* (including education and job training, family-friendly work policies, asset-building, business development, affordable housing and homelessness prevention);
- *Health and Safety* (including the protection of comprehensive reproductive healthcare, cancer detection and treatment, gender disparities in healthcare access, violence against women and trafficking in humans); and
- *Discrimination* (including sex discrimination, pay equity, tax regulation and workforce development).

4. How does the PCSW carry out its work?

Legislative Support: Each year, we research, analyze and monitor over 180 bills and provide the General Assembly with expert testimony on about 80.

Research & Public Policy: We provide research-driven critical thinking and technical assistance to organizations that work to improve women's economic self-sufficiency, both in the state and across the nation. PCSW is the lead state organization on such major national initiatives as the Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Standard (FESS), the Elder Economic Security Initiative (EESI), and the Health Economic Sufficiency Standard (HESS).

Referral & Intake: We respond to hundreds of calls from members of the public seeking information about State laws and services on topics ranging from divorce rights to safe haven for battered women.

Coalition Building: We are the State's umbrella organization, convening, coordinating and participating in dozens of coalition partners.

Eliminating Sex-discrimination: We help individuals who wish to file sex discrimination complaints with the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) and monitor sexual harassment complaints against the Department of Corrections.

Sexual Harassment Prevention: Each year, we provide Sexual Harassment Awareness and Prevention Training to thousands of State employees in agencies such as the Department of Corrections, the Banking Department, the Connecticut State University System and the Department of Revenue Services.

Public Hearings: We hold public hearings to elicit valuable information on citizens' priorities in such areas as financial security, healthcare, clinical services, affordable housing, education, childcare/eldercare, and equitable wages for those in care-giving professions, pay equity, compensated family and medical leave, and transportation.

Public Speaking: We travel throughout the state speaking to well over 100 civic and educational groups, advocacy organizations, businesses and non-profits, interpreting for diverse audiences the range of issues affecting women across the span of their lives.

5. Is the PCSW affiliated with a political party?

No. As an arm of the Connecticut General Assembly, we are non-partisan and work with legislative leaders from "both sides of the aisle."

6. How is PCSW different from an advocacy group or social service organization?

We are the only government institution structured to study and provide research on all matters concerning women in Connecticut. As the research and public policy arm of the General Assembly, the PCSW holds the State of Connecticut accountable for policies and practices that are discriminatory to women or which do not advance the status of women in such areas as government, education, the workplace, and in terms of access to healthcare. Unlike a direct social service provider, we aid those who perform the direct service.

7. How does the PCSW hear from the women in Connecticut?

PCSW convenes advisory groups charged with helping to identify the needs of Connecticut's women, and brings those needs to the attention of the State government. These groups include:

- The *Connecticut Women's Health Campaign*, a statewide coalition of experts and advocates working together to improve healthcare for women and girls;
- The *Young Women's Leadership Program*, established in 2006, inspires and empowers young women aged 18-35 to emerge as leaders in business, government and community;
- The *Women in the Trades Network*, to increase opportunities for women in the skilled trades and technical careers; and
- *The PCSW Talent Bank*, which gives the state's government and business decision-makers access to 400 qualified women willing to serve in leadership roles.

8. How much does the PCSW cost the State of Connecticut?

The PCSW's annual allotment of \$1,076,944 is far less than 1% of the State's budget (.000062%). That is approximately 77 cents for each of Connecticut's 1,399,625 women over the age of 18. This doesn't include the next generation of women who will work, pay taxes, raise families and vote in Connecticut.

9. What has the PCSW accomplished?

We worked on and helped advance legislation to: prohibit sex discrimination in credit transactions (1973); protect pregnant workers (1979); prohibit sexual harassment (1980); create the first family and medical leave protections in the country (1988 and 1989); require health insurance plans to cover a minimum of 48 hours' hospital stay for normal childbirth and 96 hours for Caesarian sections (1996); provide "Plan B" emergency contraception to victims of rape (2007); and convene (and continue to chair) the Trafficking in Persons Council (2008).