

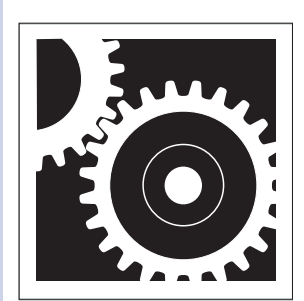


“Without VVW I would have had to settle for \$8.00 an hour, doing something that I don’t find fulfilling. I feel confident, I know I have the skills I need to do this.”
Robin, Program Graduate

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Vermont Works for Women 
 32 Malletts Bay Avenue
 Winooski, VT 05404



Vermont
 Works for
 Women

Closing The Revolving Door: Helping Women Avoid Recidivism

Who We Are

Vermont Works for Women (VWW) has spent the last 21 years helping women and girls explore, pursue and excel in nontraditional careers that pay a livable wage. For nearly a decade, VWW has developed and offered programs for incarcerated women that build skills and capacities critical to meaningful, long-term employment. Our approach is strength-based, encourages self-efficacy, is holistic in its structure and challenges cultural biases that serve to limit women’s aspirations and achievement. Our programs are designed to meet women where they are – and to challenge them to become who they can be.

Outcomes

- 75% of program graduates released from prison and eligible for work over the past two years **found work**. Three quarters of those graduates were still employed by the end of the year.
- **Recidivism of program graduates in their first year of release (11%) is less than half** the state recidivism rate for the general female population (29%).



GENDER-RESPONSIVE SKILLS TRAINING



In July 2001, VWW piloted Vermont's first vocational training program for incarcerated women. Since then, we have worked with over four hundred women and provided them with programming that combines technical training, soft-skills development, employment support, and mentoring upon their release.

Building Homes/Building Lives: Modular Home Construction

In January 2005, VWW piloted a year-round trades training program at Southeast State Correctional Facility. Over a six-month period, trainees develop skills in finish and frame carpentry, electrical wiring, plumbing, weatherization and roofing through building ENERGY STAR modular homes that will be installed as affordable housing units in Vermont communities.

Program Benefits

- Incarcerated women **learn marketable skills** in fields that pay a livable wage
- Training **develops both frame and finish construction skills**, providing access to a range of trades positions
- Allows inmates to **develop and practice "soft skills"** in problem-solving, communication, and teamwork
- **Training is year-round**, allowing us to involve women on an ongoing basis as they enter the prison
- Offers a **solid introduction to the realities of working** in the field
- Offers participants an opportunity to **develop a portfolio of work** to show to prospective employers
- **Results in energy efficient affordable housing** without competing with private industry (as only one to two units can be produced per year)

Building Homes, Building Lives has attracted national attention, and will be replicated in Maine in 2009.

VERMONT WORKS FOR WOMEN
32 Malletts Bay Ave., Winooski, VT 05404
800-639-1472 • www.vtworksforwomen.org

Other Vocational Program Models

Step Up for Women (288 student hours)

This nine-week job training program consists of three main components:

- Trades instruction, generally consisting of three weeks of carpentry, three weeks of electrical wiring, and two weeks of plumbing and pipefitting
- Physical conditioning (every day)
- **Women's Resources** (the job-readiness element crucial to the success of the program)

AutoCAD (160 student hours)

This five-week, ten-session introduction to AutoCAD includes:

- Creating architectural floor plans and elevations
- Coordinate grid entry, ASME dimensioning standards
- Editing drawings and plotting scale

Painting (100 student hours)

This training program is related to facility projects requiring resident labor. Training includes:

- Worksite safety
- Choosing paint and paint chemistry
- Mixing and choosing colors
- Surface cleaning and preparation
- Preventing paint problems (chipping, peeling, moisture, adhesion)
- Using spray equipment, texturizing
- Using or installing alternative wall coverings (paper, wood, plastics, or fabric)

Soft Skills, Job Search & Placement Activities

A gender-responsive soft skills class entitled **Women's Resources** is offered as part of all VWW programs. The curriculum was developed by VWW and is the keystone to providing effective employment training in nontraditional fields for women. Key elements of this training include:

- Developing positive work habits and communication skills
- Upgrading math skills
- Teaching time and stress management
- Interviewing and resume writing
- Recognizing and preventing sexual harassment

Sessions help participants identify concerns and barriers to successful completion of the program or employment. Instructors work closely with participants and business representatives to facilitate employment upon release from prison.

Job-related counseling: Participants meet with VWW staff to explore job opportunities and identify potential employers. These sessions identify participant concerns and barriers to finding employment, and identify and explore potential job opportunities.

Employer outreach and post-release support: VWW provides participants with opportunities to meet employers, including representatives of the Agency of Transportation and the state apprenticeship program at the facility. Upon a participant's release, VWW continues to provide employment support through regular phone calls, one-on-one meetings, and site visits to a participant's work site.



Mentoring

VWW and Mercy Connections have partnered to create a mentoring program to support women making the transition from Vermont's correctional facilities back to their home communities. These women face significant barriers to finding appropriate and affordable housing and employment, key elements of successful reintegration. Mentors can have a profound influence on supporting women as they work to rebuild their lives. To get a true sense of the program and its impact on women's lives, go to www.vtworksforwomen.org and watch our new mentoring video.

What We Can Do For You

Vermont Works for Women offers technical assistance to correctional facilities and service providers to create gender-responsive programs that take into account women's employment needs, the capacity and the resources of a given facility, regional economy and community partnerships. We currently provide technical assistance in program implementation and design in states throughout the country. **Our ultimate goal is to help correctional departments reduce recidivism by moving women into economically stable situations.** To learn more about how we can help at your facility, and to receive a DVD about the Building Homes/Building Lives program, please contact Tiffany Bluemle, VWW Executive Director at 800-639-1472 ext. 101 or tbluemle@vtworksforwomen.org

KUDOS!

"I'm the perfect example of why Vermont women need this program, it's changed the course of my life. Without it I would have had to settle for \$8.00 an hour, doing something that I don't find fulfilling. I feel confident, I know I have the skills I need to do this."

Robin
Program Graduate

"I'm thrilled to be at the ribbon cutting for this modular home constructed by Women inmates at Southeast State Correctional Facility in Windsor. This project was 18 months in the making, and addresses several issues which are near and dear to my heart—supporting incarcerated women and helping them turn their lives around, and helping to make Vermont more affordable for our families, by building affordable housing for a family in Springfield. This innovative project was spearheaded by Vermont Works for Women and on behalf of everyone here today I'd like to say thank you to this outstanding non-profit."

Jim Douglas
Governor, State of Vermont

"Being in this program has helped me with my self-esteem. Coming back to jail after 5 years was rough. Modular Homes has given me the chance to work on myself and learn a trade for my future. I feel real confident about going back out into the community and finally live a healthy life. This program helped me realize there is still hope and I have a lot to offer the community."

Amanda
Program Graduate

"This project has been such a consistent, positive initiative in an environment where that is such a special thing. There is no other project here, where I have witnessed such marked growth in both the women's skill and confidence.

Thank you! For all you've done for the many women who have worked on the project, and the sense of hope and accomplishment you offer for all the women at Windsor."

Kathy Astemborski
Deputy Superintendent
Southeast State Correctional Facility