



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health and Family Services

Jim Doyle, Governor
Kevin R. Hayden, Secretary

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For Immediate Release

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DIVISION ADMINISTRATOR SANTALA RECOGNIZED FOR LEADERSHIP
For Contributions to help thousands improve their quality of life

Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS) Division Administrator Sinikka Santala was honored last week by Rehabilitation for Wisconsin, Inc. (RFW) for her steadfast leadership and significant contributions to ensure that elders and people with disabilities have access to the same set of choices and opportunities that are available to other citizens.

“Sinikka has an unwavering and deep compassion and commitment to supporting elders and people with disabilities,” said Secretary Kevin R. Hayden. “She has been leading the Department’s long term care programs, and in so doing has improved the lives of thousands. We applaud Sinikka Santala, who is truly deserving of this award. I am so pleased she is receiving this honor.”

Santala’s accomplishments include:

- Implementing Governor Jim Doyle’s goal to expand the successful Family Care program statewide by 2011. Family Care provides seniors and people with disabilities more choices about where they live and what supports and services they receive to stay healthy and independent. When Family Care is statewide, over 10,000 individuals who are currently on waitlists for community-based long-term care services will have access to needed supports and services through this program.
- Developing and implementing two major initiatives to provide elders and people with physical and developmental disabilities the choice to relocate from a nursing home back into the community. To date, more than 2200 individuals benefit from the program, enhancing their quality of life by living in the community near family and friends.
- Redesigning the children’s long-term care system by guiding the establishment of three new community-based waivers. Through these waivers, 2700 children are receiving a comprehensive set of services to meet each child’s and family’s unique needs.

“Ms. Santala was chosen for this award because of the deep and resounding impact her work at DHFS has had on the lives of people with disabilities in Wisconsin,” states RFW Executive Director Mike Kirby. “The initiatives and programs she has designed and implemented will have a lasting and positive impact for many years to come.”

The RFW Government Leadership Award is an honor given annually to an outstanding elected or government official or employee for leadership that has significantly influenced public policy and shaped positive long term outcome for persons with disabilities.

Santala received the Government Leadership Award at the 2008 Rehabilitation and Transition Conference, held at the American Club and attended by over 600 administrators, educators and advocates for people with disabilities.

“I am deeply honored to receive this award from RFW,” Santala said. “We are making the lives of people who need long term care better and I am proud to be part of a team of state and local staff and administrators who share the vision and commitment of high quality of life and choices for Wisconsin elders and citizens with disabilities.”

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