

Dept. of Administration: Virginia Hart Special Recognition and Outstanding Leadership winners announced

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Madison, Wis. – The Department of Administration, Division of Personnel Management, Virginia Hart Award Committee, and the Wisconsin State Council on Affirmative Action are pleased to announce the winners of the 2025 Virginia Hart Special Recognition Award and the State Council on Affirmative Action Diversity Award for Outstanding Leadership.

“There’s no greater calling than that of public service, and we’re proud to be able to recognize state workers who exemplify outstanding leadership, dedication, and commitment, and lift up others through exemplary service,” said Governor Tony Evers.

Samina Grimes from the Department of Workforce Development was selected as the 2025 Virginia Hart Special Recognition Award winner. The annual award, now in its 42nd year, is given in honor of Virginia Hart, Wisconsin’s first female cabinet member. Grimes was recognized for her people-driven leadership and contributions to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, warm and steady mentorship, and longstanding commitment to vulnerable individuals and community.

Dr. Brandi Berry from the Department of Corrections was honored with the 2025 Outstanding Leadership Award, for her commitment to inclusivity, equity, diversity, and wellness for both students and staff members, serving as the school psychologist-senior and special education director at Lincoln Hills/Copper Lake School.

In addition to the award winners, two individuals were named 2025 Virginia Hart Honorable Mentions, including Colleen Holtan with the Department of Administration, and Amy Kolano, with the Department of Public Instruction.

“We’re honored to recognize the state employees who go above and beyond in serving the public as well as their colleagues across the state, and in making a tangible impact for all,” added DOA Secretary Kathy Blumenfeld.

“The State Council on Affirmative Action is honored to celebrate leaders who consistently center people, equity, and service in their work. Each of this year’s honorees demonstrates how inclusive leadership can transform workplaces, uplift others, and advance the values of public service across Wisconsin.” said Angela Nash, Chair of the State Council on Affirmative Action.

For more information, please visit the [Diversity Award website](#).