

STAFF MEMBER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Sandra Richards

Section Administrator in Psychiatry Child Services



Sandra Richards is the administrative lead for the Department of Psychiatry's Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Anxiety, Trauma and Stress sections. Creative, innovative and ever-mindful of the ways operations can be streamlined and optimized to provide improvements in care and teaching, Ms. Richards has become the Health System community's main "go-to" person for questions regarding youth services within Psychiatry.

This year, in addition to her usual duties, Ms. Richards worked with Child and Adolescent Psychiatry section director Dr. Sheila Marcus to define services within the Corner Health Center – a novel facility in Ypsilanti that provides low or no-cost health care for at-risk youth ages 12-21 and their children. In the 25-year history of the Center, such services have never been available – and they are essential for this young population in which trauma, anxiety and depression impact 40 percent of those served. Ms. Richards was instrumental in providing the administrative support necessary to introduce psychiatric services to this population.

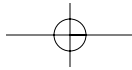
Also during this past year, Ms. Richards has been in charge of space planning for the new Rachel Upjohn Building. In this capacity, she has been essential in conceptualizing the redesign and transformation of the space plan for the clinical areas of the new building. Working with Facilities Planning as well as the departments of Psychiatry, Social Work, Psychology, Pediatrics, Family Medicine, Internal Medicine and the Center for Human Growth and Development, her history of integrity and honesty helps assure cooperation across and within departments.

Frequently, Ms. Richards encounters patients and families in crisis. When children are behaviorally disruptive, staff and faculty often call upon Ms. Richards to help keep the children in check, calm the families and, if necessary, facilitate transport of the child to the emergency room. One physician remarks, "Sandy is as comfortable providing the emotional glue for children in crisis as she is providing an ear to faculty and staff."

Another physician says, "Sandy is central to our environment of efficiency, validation and kindness, which is so important for maintaining a 'patients and families first' atmosphere, and to the recruitment and retention of a hard-working staff who help make this happen."

An expert liaison, Ms. Richards provides interface between the departments of Pediatrics, Family Medicine and Psychiatry. She is always mindful of the importance of providing prompt access for pediatrics patients in need, and has successfully provided urgent appointments for many children each month. She has worked successfully with other departments to communicate an understanding of the shortages inherent within child psychiatry nationally, and to establish cooperative relationships between faculty and staff of the Department of Pediatrics and the child psychiatrists who co-manage children with behavioral problems.





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Ms. Richards' commitment to decreasing wait times into the Department of Psychiatry for children has been particularly auspicious. She played a major role in developing new clinical and teaching programs that resulted in a reduction of wait times from three or four weeks to 10 days. Additionally, she has assisted in programs to increase faculty presence and continuity of care in child psychiatry clinics so that faculty conduct 70 to 80 percent of all visits.

Ms. Richards demonstrates remarkable strength as a capable and honest manager. She oversees a large staff who provide scheduling and support services, and her management of financial and budgetary issues is, as one physician says, "stellar, and often complimented by Financial Operations."

In short, Ms. Richards is a consummate professional, a valuable team player and a successful and effective leader, mentor and role model.

Ms. Richards joined the University of Michigan in 1992.

Ms. Richards says, "I enjoy playing golf with my husband and grandsons, watching Michigan football and going out to dinner with friends.

"I would like to thank my husband, Don Richards, my daughter, Susan Murphy, and my grandsons, Jere, Richard, and Zack Murphy, for their encouragement and support. I would also like to thank my staff who help me be successful – Nancy Aseltine, Fern Chatham, Susan Davey, Paula Halabut, Dana Harden, Tabitha Hughes, Karyn Kitchen, Susan Miller, Jean Pletcher and Sue Wonnacott – and all the staff and faculty in the Department of Psychiatry who encourage me and recognize my contributions."

