



Indian Health Service Press Release

August 2, 2023
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: newsroom@ihs.gov

IHS Announces Additional Senior Executive Service-Level CEO Positions

The Indian Health Service is announcing the appointments of five additional [Senior Executive Service](#)-level chief executive officer positions at IHS facilities across Indian Country. In 2022, the IHS received [12 additional SES allocations](#) from the Department of Health and Human Services to elevate existing CEO positions at various service units, bringing the total number of SES positions across the agency to 38. The first five were [announced on June 22](#), and the next five include:

- Capt. Brian Wren, a member of the Cherokee Nation – CEO, Lawton Indian Hospital, IHS Oklahoma City Area
- Marlene Wakefield, a member of the Seneca Nation – CEO, Rosebud Service Unit, IHS Great Plains Area
- Michelle Martinez, a member of the White Mountain Apache Tribe – CEO, Whiteriver Indian Hospital, IHS Phoenix Area
- Lisa Racine-Wells, a member of the Blackfeet Nation – CEO, Blackfeet Community Hospital, IHS Billings Area
- Dr. Sara Jumping Eagle, a member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe – CEO, Pine Ridge Hospital, IHS Great Plains Area

“Our goal is to empower leadership at every level across the Indian health system,” said IHS Director Roselyn Tso. “Guided by their commitment to serving our American Indian and Alaska Native patients, these exceptional leaders embody the vision of a healthier, more equitable future and ensure that our tribal communities receive the quality health care they deserve.”

The IHS remains committed to recruiting, developing, and retaining a dedicated, competent, and caring workforce to provide quality care across the Indian health system. Elevating CEO positions to the SES level enhances the leadership capacity of the IHS to optimize resources, facilities, oversight, and consistency across the organization. In addition, this will create equity across the IHS to effectively recruit and retain executive-level leaders to manage what is presently an executive-level assignment carried out by a General Schedule grade 15.

Chief executive officers, also referred to as health system administrators, oversee the successful administration of IHS hospitals and medical centers. These individuals must manage increasingly complex and integrated health care, financial, professional, and administrative

organizations, and maintain accreditation and certification standards to ensure the highest level of quality care and safety for American Indian and Alaska Native patients. They are also tasked with working and collaborating within a system that overlaps federal, tribal, state and local governments, urban Indian organizations, and tribal communities to accomplish the goals for implementing effective health care policies and systems.

CEOs also increasingly interact at an executive level to uphold the special government-to-government relationship between the federal government and tribes to promote the health care needs of the populations served. Additionally, CEOs provide technical assistance to tribes and urban Indian organizations to develop and sustain tribal health care programs, and to promote collaboration in the development of the strategic plan for each IHS service unit.

The Senior Executive Service lead America's workforce. As the keystone of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, the SES was established to "...ensure that the executive management of the Government of the United States is responsive to the needs, policies, and goals of the Nation and otherwise is of the highest quality." Members of the SES serve in key positions and as leaders, possess well-honed executive skills and share a broad perspective on government and a public service commitment that is grounded in the Constitution. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management manages the overall federal executive personnel program, providing the day-to-day oversight and assistance to agencies as they develop, select, and manage their federal executives.

The IHS, an agency in the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#), provides a comprehensive health service delivery system for approximately 2.8 million American Indians and Alaska Natives who belong to [574 federally recognized tribes](#) in 37 states. Follow the agency via social media on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

###