



Athena S. Elliott, M.P.A.

Acting Director of Public Affairs

Indian Health Service

Athena S. Elliott, a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, has over 20 years of leadership and management experience in the Indian Health Service (IHS), both at the Headquarters and Area level. In her current position as the Acting Director of Public Affairs, Ms. Elliott advises senior officials on public affairs aspects of agency operational decisions and procedures, recommends agency public affairs policy, directs the development and evaluation of public affairs programs, oversees media interactions at the Headquarters level, and serves as the agency spokesperson.

Prior to starting her career with the IHS, Ms. Elliott worked for an Indian-owned public accounting firm in New Mexico, conducting audits for Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations. She joined the IHS in 1984 as an internal auditor in the Albuquerque Area IHS Office, where she was responsible for overseeing internal management reviews of Albuquerque and Navajo Area Service Units and Headquarters program functions located in New Mexico.

Ms. Elliott joined the IHS Headquarters staff in 1987 as the Chief of the Systems Review and Analysis Branch in the Division of Resources Management. She subsequently served as the Deputy Associate Director in the IHS Office of Tribal Activities (OTA), where she was responsible for the day-to-day management of the OTA. At that time, the OTA was the office responsible for advising the IHS Director and senior Agency managers on issues related to Self-Determination contracting and for monitoring Agency compliance with Self-Determination policies, administrative procedures, and guidelines. She was also instrumental in the development of Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, P.L. 93-638, regulations. This Act provides the mechanism for American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes to contract with the Federal Government for the administration of health care to their Tribal members.

From 1997 to 2004, Ms. Elliott served as the Director of the Management Policy Support Staff (MPSS) in the IHS Office of Management Support. As the Director of MPSS, she was responsible for coordinating the Agency's management control program, directing policy development, and overseeing changes to organizational infrastructure in the IHS.

She has received numerous awards during her professional career, including the IHS Director's Award for Excellence in 1992, the IHS exemplary award for group performance in 1992, the HHS Secretary's Award for Distinguished Service in 1997 for her work on the P.L. 93-638 negotiated rulemaking committee, and numerous other awards for superior administrative service throughout her Federal career. Ms. Elliott also served on the President's Task Force for Health Care Reform in 1993.

Ms. Elliott earned a bachelor of science degree in business administration/accounting from the California State University in Sacramento, California, and a master's degree in public administration from American University in Washington, D.C., in 1996. Ms. Elliott has completed the HHS Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program. Her personal interests include advocacy for special education programs in local public schools.