



Denise G. Exendine

Acting Director, Urban Indian Health Program

Indian Health Service

Denise G. Exendine is a member of the Delaware Nation, Oklahoma. She began her career with the Indian Health Service (IHS), an agency of the Department of Health and Human Services, in 1978. Her initial assignment with the IHS was at the IHS Oklahoma City Area Office as a contract specialist.

As the Acting Director of the IHS Urban Indian Health Program (UIHP) in the Office of the Director, Ms. Exendine is responsible for the oversight of health programs for American Indians and Alaska Natives residing in urban areas. These programs include direct medical services, alcohol/substance abuse services, mental health, HIV/AIDS, and health promotion and disease prevention services. Urban Indian health programs strive to elevate the health status and assess the unmet needs of Indians residing in urban centers. Ms. Exendine is responsible for evaluating UIHP operations, procedures, and management systems. She is also responsible for implementing improvements developed through collaborative efforts with the urban health programs and urban organizations, Tribes, and Tribal organizations, as well as with federal, state, and local governments and foundations. Additionally, she serves as the principal advisor to the IHS Director on issues related to urban Indian health.

Ms. Exendine has served in the UIHP since 2001 as a health systems specialist. She has participated in the Agency's efforts towards the reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act. She also played a key role in the Special Diabetes Program for Indians set-aside funding for the urban programs, the UIHP data workgroup, the annual UIHP budget justification narrative, and various urban policy workgroups. In addition, she has had the critical role for the UIHP of preparing materials for congressional briefings and hearings as well as crafting responses to congressional inquiries.

Since rejoining the IHS in 1990, Ms. Exendine has also served at the Shawnee Service Unit in Shawnee, Oklahoma, and the W.W. Hastings Indian Hospital in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. As business office manager at the W.W. Hastings Hospital, she developed, staffed, and implemented the Patient Benefits Coordination Program. This highly successful program served as the first IHS/CMS-Medicaid Outreach project and has been cited as a Best Practice model by federal agencies and private sector entities for identifying and developing strategies to overcome barriers experienced by American Indians and Alaska Natives in seeking enrollment in federal and state benefits programs. Ms. Exendine, in collaboration with the Cherokee Nation, also developed training that was provided to patient benefit advocates of the Cherokee Nation to enable them to provide the same level of assistance at Tribal clinics. As a result of the Patient Benefits Coordination Program, American Indians and Alaska Natives in Northeastern Oklahoma now have a greater number of health care and provider treatment options, and the W.W. Hastings Hospital receives a marked increase in federal and state reimbursements.

Ms. Exendine earned a bachelor of science degree in business education from the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond, Oklahoma, and has completed coursework toward a master's degree. She has completed studies in the HHS Executive Leadership Development Program.