



Loretta Christensen, M.D.

Chief Medical Officer

Indian Health Service

Dr. Loretta Christensen, MBA, MSJ, FACS, an enrolled member of the Navajo Tribe, serves as the chief medical officer of the Indian Health Service. The IHS, an agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is the principal federal health care provider for American Indians and Alaska Natives. As the chief medical officer, Dr. Christensen is IHS' lead expert on medical and public health topics, giving technical consultation and guidance to the IHS Office of the Director and IHS staff throughout the country on American Indian and Alaska Native health care policies and issues. She provides national leadership for clinical and community-based health programs of the agency, and serves as the primary liaison and advocate for IHS health professionals.

Dr. Christensen began her career with the IHS as a general surgeon. She has recently served as the chief medical officer of the Navajo Area Indian Health Service from 2017-2021, and as chief medical officer at the Gallup Service Unit from 2014-2017. She also served as acting IHS chief medical officer from May to June 2021. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she served as the co-lead for the COVID-19 Response Branch and the Medical Branch lead for the Navajo Nation's Unified Coordination Group.

Dr. Christensen received her undergraduate degree in biological anthropology from Harvard University and her medical degree from Hahnemann University Medical School, now the Drexel University College of Medicine. She completed her general surgery residency at Monmouth Medical Center in New Jersey and a fellowship in trauma and critical care at Cooper University Hospital. Dr. Christensen also holds a master of business administration from Georgian Court University and a master of jurisprudence with a specialty in healthcare law from Seton Hall Law School.

Before joining the Navajo Area, Dr. Christensen served for 17 years as the trauma clinical director and associate director of the surgical intensive care unit at Jersey Shore University Hospital. She was also the director of integrative medicine and non-invasive pain management services, as well as an assistant professor of surgery at the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. She has specialty training in medical acupuncture, palliative care, functional medicine, just culture, quality management and patient safety. Dr. Christensen is board certified in general surgery and a fellow of the American College of Surgeons.