

CDR Karen Hearod, MSW, LCSW Bio

CDR Karen Hearod serves as the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Regional Administrator for Region 6, which includes Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma & Texas. SAMHSA is the agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation. SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities. In her role as Regional Administrator, she supports stakeholders through technical assistance, promoting program development, policy innovation, and system transformation. Prior to accepting her position at SAMHSA, CDR Hearod served as the Indian Health Service Oklahoma City Area Acting Behavioral Health Consultant. In this position CDR Hearod had oversight over behavioral health and substance use disorder programs across Oklahoma, Texas, and Kansas providing services impacting 410,00 Native Americans. In addition to providing leadership as Chair for the IHS National Zero Suicide Advisory Committee, she served as a member of the National Suicide Crisis Policy Committee working to establish the first IHS national suicide care policy.

During her federal career, CDR Hearod has served as the Chief Behavioral Health Officer for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. Hearod, who is a proud member of the Choctaw Nation, oversaw a behavioral health system which spanned the area equivalent to the size of Vermont including 13 facilities and 90 staff. She was successful in seeking out and implementing multiple grants addressing substance abuse and suicide prevention, sexual assault forensic treatment and prevention, HIV and teen pregnancy prevention, and cardiovascular disease prevention. She led the creation of the Choctaw Nation Wind Horse Treatment Center providing family centered substance abuse prevention and treatment services for high risk families in an area with little access to care. She also facilitated the transition to a fully integrated Electronic Health Record for Behavioral Health with Choctaw Nation Health programs greatly improving continuity of care.

In addition, she also serves on a federal mental health response team, deploying to both natural and man-made disasters. As part of this team she has provided care to those impacted during the Boston Marathon Bombing, Sandy Hook School Shooting, Umpqua Community College Shooting, Hurricanes Sandy and Ike, and response to suicide crisis in several Native American communities.

CDR Hearod received a Master of Social Work degree from the University of Oklahoma and a Bachelor of Social Work from East Central University. She is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and currently pursuing a graduate certificate in Global Health Engagement from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, MD.