

April Ross serves as Director of Care Management for the EBCI Tribal Option at the Cherokee Indian Hospital Authority and is widely recognized as an exceptional leader, mentor, and advocate for both her team and the Cherokee community. Through her compassion, vision, and unwavering commitment to patient-centered care, April has helped shape and strengthen Tribal Option into a nationally respected care management program that continues to improve outcomes for members across the region.

April consistently demonstrates integrity through honesty, accountability, transparency, and genuine care for others. Staff across the organization describe her as a leader who not only leads with expertise, but with heart. She fosters a supportive environment where employees feel valued, respected, and empowered to succeed. Team members frequently describe her as approachable, trustworthy, and deeply invested in both their personal and professional growth. Whether mentoring employees, guiding staff through difficult situations, or advocating for improvements that benefit both employees and patients, April leads with compassion and professionalism that inspires those around her.

Over the course of her career at Cherokee Indian Hospital Authority, April has earned the trust and admiration of colleagues by consistently going above and beyond in service to her community. Having advanced from a frontline position into leadership, she brings a unique understanding of the challenges staff face and uses that experience to advocate for meaningful solutions. Her leadership philosophy emphasizes grace, teamwork, accountability, and continuous quality improvement, while always keeping the needs of Tribal Option members and the Cherokee community at the center of decision-making.

April's responsiveness and dedication to staff support are evident in the way she remains consistently available to her team, often working through lunch, after hours, and across multiple communication platforms to ensure employees have the guidance and support they need. Despite leading a rapidly growing department, she continues to make time for each team member individually, creating a culture where staff feel heard, supported, and empowered. Her attentiveness to recurring staff concerns has also led to the development of improved workflows, FAQs, and standardized processes that strengthen communication and operational consistency throughout the department.

Her contributions to organizational success have been extensive and transformative. As Director of Care Management, April oversees numerous complex operational initiatives including policy revisions aligned with state contracts, development of standard operating procedures, implementation of comprehensive training programs, coordination with external stakeholders, and oversight of care management services required under the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Medicaid program. She has also played a critical role in shaping the Guiding Care Platform to improve state reporting accuracy, identify social determinants of health, and better support care managers in meeting the needs of Tribal Option members.

April's leadership extends far beyond her department. She has represented Tribal Option, CIHA, and the Cherokee community in presentations, conferences, and collaborative meetings with regional partners, community agencies, and state leaders. Her strong relationships within the community allow members to trust her as a reliable source of guidance and support during some of their most difficult moments. Community members consistently recognize her willingness to

listen, connect families with needed resources, and advocate tirelessly for the wellbeing of the Cherokee people.

A highly respected collaborator, April works closely with departments across the organization to strengthen service delivery and operational effectiveness. Her partnership with Human Resources has improved hiring practices, job descriptions, and performance management processes, while her collaboration with Analenisgi has supported the implementation of specialized care management services for vulnerable populations, including individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and child welfare needs. Her ability to unite teams around shared goals has strengthened communication, built trust, and advanced organizational success across CIHA.

Through innovation, strategic thinking, and deep understanding of her community, April continues to identify creative solutions that improve patient care and operational outcomes. From analyzing healthcare data to better align care managers with member needs, to identifying reporting risks and improving care management systems, she consistently demonstrates initiative, resourcefulness, and forward-thinking leadership. Her vision, humility, and dedication have made a lasting impact on the Cherokee Indian Hospital Authority and the Cherokee community, making her exceptionally deserving of recognition as Employee of the Year.