



Opella Ernest, M.D.

Senior Vice President, HCSC Operations

Health Care Service Corporation, a Mutual Legal Reserve Company (HCSC), and an Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, is the largest customer-owned health insurer in the United States and fourth largest overall, operating through our Blue Cross and Blue Shield® Plans in Illinois, Montana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas.

Dr. Opella Ernest is senior vice president of HCSC Operations, which provides the foundational infrastructure to support the organization's more than 16 million members. As a core pillar of the company, Operations includes customer service, information technology, health care management, and data and analytics solutions.

Previously, Dr. Ernest served as senior vice president and Chief Clinical Officer of HCSC. In this role, she led clinical strategy to support efficient delivery of high-quality, affordable health care. Additionally, she was responsible for medical policy, clinical operations, quality improvement and community health initiatives.

Dr. Ernest has also served as divisional senior vice president and Chief Medical Officer of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois, where she led the team responsible for a network of more than 70,000 providers and 2,000 facilities. Prior to joining the Illinois Plan, she served as senior vice president of Medical Management for HealthSpring, Inc., where she was responsible for supporting care management for Medicare Advantage Plans.

As a results-driven healthcare professional, Dr. Ernest has a firm track record of successfully developing clinical programs and partnering with the provider community to improve quality outcomes. Clinically, she has practiced and held medical director leadership roles at Advocate Health Care, Visiting Nurse Association (FQHCs) and the Henry Ford Medical Group.

Dr. Ernest's notable awards and recognition include Crain's Notable Women in Healthcare (2020); Chicago United Business Leaders of Color (2017); Diversity MBA Emerging Executive Leaders (2014); Fellow, Institute of Medicine (2014); and Chicago Defender Women of Excellence (2013).

Dr. Ernest currently serves on the board of directors for Chicago United and is chair of the board of directors for the Metropolitan Chicago American Heart Association. She has previously served as co-chair for the Metropolitan Chicago Heart Walk and on the boards of the American Lung Association and Rosencrance.

Dr. Ernest is a board-certified family physician. She earned her medical degree from the Ohio State University and a bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan.