

	County of Sacramento Mental Health Division Adult Mental Health Services	Policy No.	03-04
		Issued Date	01/14/08
		Revision Date	09/18/09
AREA: Clinical & Psychosocial Rehabilitation Services	TITLE: Level of Care Determination		
Approved by:	Approved By:		
Kelli Weaver, LCSW Program Coordinator	Sandy Damiano, PhD Chief		

I. POLICY

Adult Mental Health Services has adopted the Level of Care Utilization System (LOCUS) Adult Version developed by the American Association of Community Psychiatrists. This tool provides a standardized assessment approach in determining level of care and service needs. The LOCUS contains specific evaluation dimensions and defines levels of care in the service continuum.

II. LOCUS DESCRIPTION

A. Evaluation Dimensions:

1. LOCUS is a standardized tool that provides a consistent data set across six evaluation dimensions. The dimensions include the following:

I	Risk of Harm
II	Functional Status
III	Medical, Addictive and Psychiatric Co-Morbidity
IV	Recovery Environment A. Level of Stress B. Level of Support
V	Treatment and Recovery History
VI	Engagement & Recovery Status (<i>incorporates Stages of Change</i>)

2. Recovery Environment has two subscales (level of stress and level of support). The other dimensions have only one scale.
3. Each dimension has a five-point scale with specific behavioral criteria for staff use in scoring.

B. Levels Of Care:

1. There are six levels of care defined within the service continuum.

Level	LOCUS Category Descriptions	
I	Recovery Maintenance & Health Management	See Attachment I: Services Grid <i>This document depicts service levels for core programs.</i>
II	Low Intensity Community Based Services	
III	High Intensity Community Based Services	
IV	Medically Monitored Non-Residential Services	
V	Medically Monitored Residential Services	
VI	Medically Managed Residential Services	

2. Each level is defined in terms of four variables:
 - a. Care Environment
 - b. Clinical Capabilities
 - c. Supportive Services
 - d. Crisis Resolution and Prevention Services

III. PROCEDURES

A. Rationale for Use:

1. Functions as a “decision support tool” and part of a full culturally competent clinical assessment. LOCUS assists clinical staff to measure and document clinical necessity for appropriate levels of care.
2. Assists staff across agencies in guiding a level of care decision based on multiple parameters versus a limited data set such as diagnosis or length of hospitalization.
3. Enables treatment teams to review progress over time and may provide a treatment focus in some areas, *e.g.*, working on client’s level of support.
4. Promotes program and system accountability.

B. Indications for Use:

There are indications for use in the outpatient and subacute service sectors. These include the following and are depicted in the table below:

1. Initial service authorization for intensive services (Level IV – VI). The referring treatment team completes a LOCUS as part of the referral packet to the Adult Access Team or Intensive Placement Team (IPT) as indicated in the table below.
2. Assessment for continued intensive service provision, *e.g.*, reauthorization.
3. Service Level III Exception: Staff are not required to submit a LOCUS assessment to Adult Access for a Level III service need. *However, LOCUS completion is required every six months.* This is used as an assessment / clinical tool. Services and supports should be consistent with a Level III need.

4. Acute psychiatric hospitalization caution – Ratings in an acute psychiatric hospitalization will vary considerably until a client reaches a baseline and /or readiness for outpatient or subacute services.
5. When clinically indicated.

Level of Service	LOCUS required for Service authorization	Authorization Team:	LOCUS Assessment Completed by / Frequency
Level I & II – <i>LOCUS completion not required.</i>	N/A	N/A	Per staff indication.
Level III	N/A	N/A	Treatment Team / 6 months
Level IV	Required	Adult Access or IPT - <i>as specified by contract scope</i>	Treatment Team / 6 months
Level V & VI	Required	IPT	IPT / Varies

C. LOCUS Materials:

1. LOCUS PDF – lists six evaluation dimensions with definitions
2. LOCUS Decision Tool – staff input scores into the program and notes responses to two questions. Program notes level of care.
3. LOCUS Progress Note – documentation of LOCUS score, level of service recommendation and rationale.
4. Service Grid - places core Adult MH programs within LOCUS levels of care. See Service Directory for a comprehensive list of services.

D. Application of LOCUS:

1. The staff or team must:
 - a. Be objective. Each dimension has five a point scale. Each item in the scale is described behaviorally for staff use in scoring.
 - b. Evaluate the client as s/he is currently functioning.
 - c. Do not assume the client requires the supports s/he is currently receiving. Examples: Would the client require medication prompting in a community based setting? Would the client request frequent or daily visits in order to retain his or her housing? Does the client require after-hours and weekend supports?
 - d. A LOCUS score that suggests a lower level of care at the first six month interval would prompt the team to focus treatment on transition to a lower level of care. The transition process and timeframe should be noted in the client’s care plan and is contingent upon clinical considerations for each unique client.

2. Multi-Agency Staffing Meeting:
 - a. The LOCUS rating and recommendation should be discussed and considered in level of care multi-agency clinical staffing meetings for designated agencies.
 - b. See Adult MH P&P 09-02 Multi-Agency Collaboration Agreement.

E. Training:

1. Staff must complete LOCUS training by designated Adult Mental Health LOCUS trainers. LOCUS materials are provided at the training.
2. Training includes basic didactic information plus practice vignettes.
3. Staff develops proficiency by practicing with more experienced LOCUS users.
4. Each Program is required to have an identified LOCUS Lead. Leads must be authorized by the county staff training team in writing.
5. County trainers provide LOCUS coaching at designated Provider sites until a LOCUS Lead is fully trained.
6. LOCUS consultation is available for technical assistance.

F. Documentation & Billing:

1. LOCUS Progress Note - Staff must document LOCUS completion, service level recommendation and rationale in a LOCUS Progress Note. If LOCUS is completed as part of the Re-Assessment document by qualified staff, staff shall document and attach the LOCUS Progress Note.
2. The MHTC is authorized to use a specialized “MHTC LOCUS Summary Note.”
3. Adult Comprehensive Assessment – Note LOCUS assessment, if indicated, in the Reasons for Service section. Can reference and attach the LOCUS Progress Note for further information.
4. Adult Reassessment – If LOCUS is indicated, complete the appropriate section on page 3. Can reference and attach the LOCUS Progress Note for further information.
5. Billing - LOCUS is a billable as an “assessment” service for outpatient providers. The LOCUS assessment must be documented in the progress note along with changes, when indicated, in the treatment plan or disposition.

G. Avatar Data Entry:

Staff should enter LOCUS scores and recommendations into Avatar. Required fields include:

- a. Date of LOCUS assessment
- b. Practitioner
- c. Service Level Recommendation (per LOCUS rating)
- d. Clinically Recommended Service Level. If this differs from item d., clinical rationale should be clearly indicated per LOCUS Progress Note. The note requires staff to document the individual’s behavioral anchors assigned to each dimension.

Form References:[Adult MH Service Levels Grid](#)[Adult MH Services LOCUS Progress Note](#)

IV. REFERENCES	Related Policies & Procedures	State/Federal Codes/Other References
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adult MH P&P 01-03 Access to Services ▪ Adult MH P&P 09-02 Multi-Agency Collaboration ▪ QM P&P 10-01 Adult Comprehensive Assessment ▪ QM P&P 10-05 Adult Re-Assessment 	N/A
V. CONTACTS	Name	E-mail
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VI. SCOPE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Staff <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Treatment Center <input type="checkbox"/> Specific grant/specialty resource	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adult Contract Providers <input type="checkbox"/> Children's Contract Providers