



## QA vs. QI: What's the Difference?

Due to its size and unlike most of the county mental health and behavioral health plans in California, the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) has separate units for Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement. This raises the question of what the conceptual difference is between Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement.

**Quality Assurance or QA** is associated with ensuring and maintaining adherence to rules, regulations, and policies. QA provides a minimum standard for services and practices that comply with State and federal standards including documentation, licensing, and access to services. QA monitors these activities and participates in Departmental reviews.

**Quality Improvement or QI** is associated with continuous quality improvement of mental health services beyond the minimum. QI is about setting goals in collaboration with stakeholders, creating performance measures to determine change, and collecting qualitative or quantitative data on performance. The results are presented to make sustained improvements to programs and services.

In LACDMH, the QA and QI Units are managed by the Quality, Outcomes, and Training Division. They often work in collaboration to support the LACDMH system, providers, and clients. Below are some general examples of the kinds of activities each unit is engaged in.

### QA Activities

- Audits and reviews
- Certification and Credentialing
- Chart reviews
- Consultation
- Data monitoring
- Implementation guidelines
- Performance monitoring
- Use of workgroups to collect feedback and inform implementation
- Workflow analysis

### QI Activities

- Consultation
- Customer satisfaction
- Uses surveys to gather data
- Performance monitoring
- Performance Improvement Projects (PIPs)
- Reviews data to identify areas for improvement
- Sets goals and objectives based on research and input from stakeholders
- Use of workgroups to collect feedback and inform the development of improvement projects

Find out more information on the LACDMH website:

LACDMH QA Website

<https://dmh.lacounty.gov/qa/>

LACDMH QI Website

<https://dmh.lacounty.gov/qid/>