

LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

Quality, Outcomes, & Training
Division

LevelOfCare@dmh.lacounty.gov

Purpose

- Assesses the level of care needs for individuals with behavioral health disorders
- Determines the appropriate level of care based on six dimensions

Administration

- Administered to adult clients ages 21 and up
- Any mental health professional who has completed LOCUS training can administer the LOCUS
- Conduct a structured interview and score the six dimensions, then calculate the overall level of care recommendation
- Completion of **every dimension** is required
- *New Clients:* After initial assessment and every 6 months
- *Existing clients:* Complete within 6 months of LOCUS implementation, then at regular intervals of 6 months thereafter (or whenever the client's status or circumstances change)

Availability

The LOCUS is available in English



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DEPARTMENT OF
MENTAL HEALTH
hope. recovery. wellbeing.



WELLNESS • RECOVERY • RESILIENCE

LOCUS Quick Guide

Level of Care Utilization System

Assesses the level of care needs for individuals with behavioral health disorders, ages 21 and above.

Advantages of the LOCUS

- Informs treatment planning, service provision and transitions in care
- Supports clinical decision making and caseload management
- Establishes a common language for providers
- Promotes recovery-oriented care

LOCUS Levels of Care

Level 0: Basic Services: Prevention and Health Maintenance

Level 1: Recovery Maintenance and Health Management

Level 2: Low intensity Community Based Services

Level 3: High intensity Community Based Services

Level 4: Medically Monitored Community Based Services

Level 5: Medically Monitored Residential Services*

Level 6: Medically Managed Residential Services*

*LA County DMH is not utilizing the LOCUS with clients being considered for residential or inpatient settings (levels 5-6). Clients should be referred to DMH Health Access and Integration for more in-depth assessment.

Service Examples Based on Level of Care Assigned

Level 0: Prevention, outreach, screening, and crisis support services (i.e., community education, hotlines, early identification)

Level 1: Managed Care/Primary care or graduation from mental health services

Level 2: Recovery-oriented with peer support, minimal clinical intervention (i.e. Wellness Services)

Level 3: Focused therapy, rehabilitation, and case management (i.e. Outpatient Services, Targeted Case Management)

Level 4: High-intensity, including FSP, certain housing and ACT-like services

Levels 5&6: Inpatient, residential, ERS/Sub-Acute, or HOME Team services

*Programs examples are subject to change after July 1, 2026

Scoring Information

- Each dimension is scored on a 5-point scale
- If there is uncertainty regarding which score to select, select the higher of the two scores
- When a client's circumstances do not fit a LOCUS descriptor exactly, choose the criterion that is the closest fit
- Scores inform level of care recommendations, they do not replace clinical judgment
- The first three dimensions of LOCUS contain 'Independent Criteria.' LOCUS uses a software-based algorithm that weighs certain dimensional scores (Independent Criteria) heavier than others. Higher scores on these will result in higher level of care recommendations, regardless of the overall summation of all dimensional scores.
- The LOCUS evaluation results interface will include fields for both the **Recommended Level of Care** (based on assessment results) and the user-selected **Actual Level of Care** provided, with an accompanying section to document **Reason for Variance** if the actual level differs from the recommendation