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# LOCUS Annual User's Bulletin

## 2025

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American Association for Community Psychiatry

# Introduction

Welcome to the 2nd issue of the annual **LOCUS User's Bulletin**. The Bulletin is sponsored by the American Association for Community Psychiatry (AACP) to provide key updates on LOCUS.

This edition focuses on the revision process for the next version of the tool, tentatively titled LOCUS 30 to acknowledge the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its inception. It will also contain additional details about training and supporting resources. LOCUS Users' Bulletin 2023, the inaugural Bulletin, reported on the annual review of LOCUS that collected input and feedback, questions, and concerns from LOCUS users. This edition of the Bulletin focuses on enumerating those issues as well as additional items addressed in LOCUS 30 with expanded explanations and clarification on how to score certain dimensions.

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## LOCUS Review and Revision

Over the past year, a revision work group has been actively engaged in an intensive review of LOCUS 20, making proposed changes for the instructions, rating indicators and levels of care descriptions. These changes were derived from input from users and from insights gained from the development of clinical scenarios for training and inter-rater reliability exercises. Some substantive changes will be introduced into the wording for ratings indicators, which, in rare cases, may result in different ratings in some dimensions, but which are not expected to change the ultimate level of care recommendation. The review and revision process is a careful and painstaking endeavor that the workgroup hopes to complete by the end of 2025. Once completed, the workgroup will ask for comments and suggestions from a variety of users and other stakeholders. Current LOCUS users and other interested parties will be given ample notice and support to implement the updated version of the instrument, planned for release in early 2026.

Many of the issues that will be addressed in LOCUS 30 were described in last year's Bulletin and are summarized below:

- Dimension I: Risk of Harm will clarify the definition of harmful behaviors, which include *intentional* and *unintentional* acts that may cause permanent injury and disability or death.
- Dimension III: Co-Occurring Conditions will include enhanced instructions regarding the selection of the presenting condition and the scoring of co-occurring disorders within the same category.
- Dimension V: Treatment and Recovery History will include rating prompts to aid in evaluating past responses to treatment and engagement when access barriers and discriminatory or culturally incongruent practices may have impacted the outcome.
- Instructions will address the application of LOCUS to specific types of conditions (e.g., eating disorders, non-substance related addictions, neurocognitive conditions) and their behavioral manifestations.
- Instructions will include recommendations for service intensity and its relationship with service planning, as well as the influence of temporal or historical issues on ratings with additional guidance on “here and now” ratings.

Several other issues not described in the previous Bulletin also will be addressed in LOCUS 30:

- Dimension I: Risk of Harm, & Dimension IVA: Recovery Environment-Level of Stress will include clarified instructions for rating substance use.
- Dimension II: Functional Status will clarify instructions to distinguish between functional deficits which cause *immediate* risk of harm (rated on Dim I) versus those that create potential non-life-threatening impairments (rated on Dim II).
- Dimension III: Co-morbidity will be expanded to address neurocognitive conditions.
- Dimension V: Treatment and Recovery History will include expanded instructions on weighting of past versus current treatment responses.
- Level of Care Descriptions will address the sublevels of care for Levels 5 & 6 and their relationship to the emergency and crisis care continuum.
- Instructions will include clarification of recommendations for the frequency of reviews for payer approval of services at various levels of care.
- Instructions will address transition planning as it relates to LOCUS scoring, emphasizing prospective rating when considering transition from a higher to a lower level of care.
- Instructions will address the factors to consider when choosing LOCUS v. CALOCUS-CASII for transition age youth and young adults.
- Instructions will consider the choice between adjustments in the treatment planning process versus shifts to alternative levels of care.

# LOCUS Training and Reliability Updates:

## AACP Online LOCUS Training and Certification:

- A new online, asynchronous, standardized LOCUS training was launched at the end of 2023. The training consists of five modules that incorporate vignette-based scoring and interactive opportunities for learning checks. The training takes about five hours to complete. To pass the training and receive an official certificate of completion, the trainee/user must answer 18 out of 25 multiple choice exam questions correctly (72%), documenting their knowledge acquisition. *The AACP strongly recommends that LOCUS users receive AACP-approved training* to ensure consistency of LOCUS use, which is becoming increasingly more important as LOCUS continues to be recognized as a national standard.
- In addition to the certification training, an online, asynchronous AACP LOCUS Refresher course has also been developed to help ensure continuous competency development in LOCUS use. The LOCUS Refresher training takes about one hour to complete, including interactive vignette rating and scoring and a brief knowledge acquisition quiz. The Refresher is intended for LOCUS users who have already completed at least one AACP-approved LOCUS certification. Under development is a training experience that builds upon the previous training course with targeted vignettes requiring more nuanced rating and scoring interpretations. This supplementary training will be available in March 2025 and will be especially helpful to seasoned LOCUS users.
- Periodic live LOCUS consultation sessions have been offered throughout the year, to give LOCUS users an opportunity to interact with LOCUS developers directly, and to explore aspects of LOCUS in more depth, according to their individual interests and applications. These sessions are offered virtually, via Zoom, monthly for about one hour, and will be offered more frequently if needed. Each session can accommodate up to twenty participants from across multiple organizations. Those who wish to register for an upcoming LOCUS consultation session can do so by completing registration at this [Zoom meeting scheduling link](#).
- Several new vignettes were developed this year for organizations to use to check inter-rater reliability among their staff. These vignettes reflect the diversity of the populations served by behavioral health care providers. The AACP has encouraged organizations to designate “LOCUS leaders” among their staff who have had extensive experience with using LOCUS. They can then be available to consult when staff have questions, and they can assist in quality improvement activities related to LOCUS use.

# Opportunities for Involvement:

Please direct any questions or feedback to Stephanie Smit-Dillard at: [Stephanie.Smit-Dillard@communitypsychiatry.org](mailto:Stephanie.Smit-Dillard@communitypsychiatry.org)

We welcome your comments and are always looking for volunteers to help with various aspects of LOCUS, its use, evaluation, and training.

## Summary of Bulletin Key Points

- ❖ LOCUS 30 is scheduled for release in early 2026. It will provide enhanced instructions on defining harmful behaviors, applying LOCUS to specific types of disorders (e.g. eating disorders, neuro-cognitive deficits etc.), applying LOCUS during transition planning, clarification of sub-levels of care for levels 5 & 6, and frequency of reviews for payer approval among other considerations.
- ❖ Current LOCUS users will be given ample notification and supports in transitioning to the updated version of LOCUS.
- ❖ LOCUS Certification Training and LOCUS Refresher Training are available for LOCUS users on the AACP's learning management system. This training is asynchronous and self-paced.
- ❖ LOCUS users can also choose to attend drop-in LOCUS consultation sessions, available twice per month. Registration is available through this [Zoom meeting scheduling link](#)