



Linking Quality Improvement of Services to
Quality Improvement of Data Collection:
An Example of a Successful Outcome in a
Large Coordinated System

Astrid Beigel, Ph.D.
Christine Torre

Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health

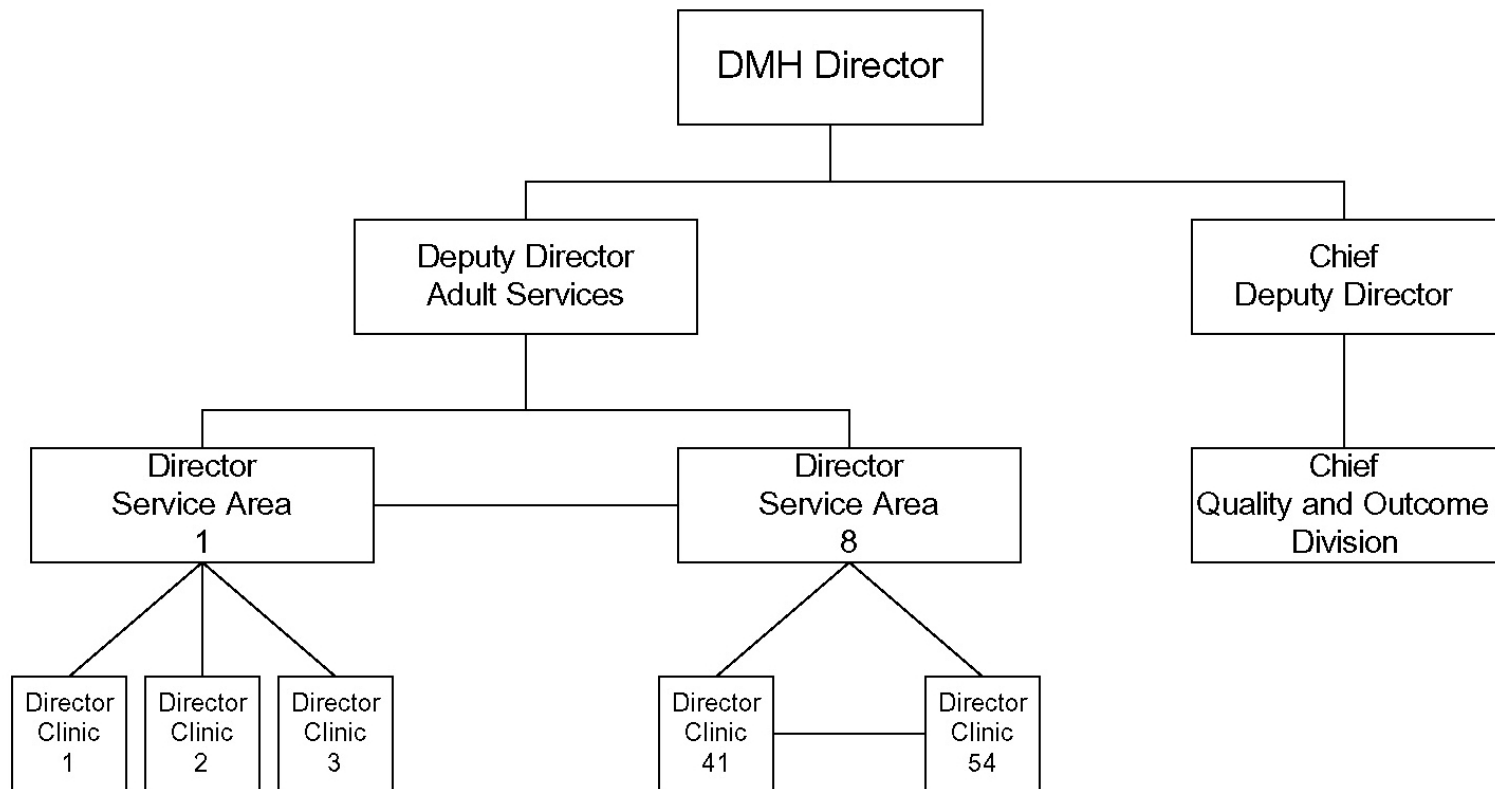
May 2002



Presentation Goals

- Recognize quality improvement of services is dependent on quality of data
- Define essentials to achieving data quality
- Describe a specific approach for improving data quality

Adult Outpatient System Structure



8 Service Areas
3 - 13 Adult Clinics per Service Area
54 Adult Clinics Total



Magnitude of Adult Outpatient System

- 10 million: population LA County
- 8 service areas
- 3-13 providers per service area
- 56 providers in total
- 120,000 unduplicated clients served annually
- Both DMH and contracted clinics in all areas



History of Outcome Measurement in Los Angeles

- State mandated system began in 1991
- Relationship of Counties to the State
- Structure, implementation approach
- The process - internal and external



Marketing the System

- To management at various levels
- To providers at clinic level
- Using the system for quality improvement
- The need for good data begins with compliance
- Undoing the myth of the mantra
WE NEVER GET ANYTHING BACK



Checking Compliance Before Interventions

- Generally poor compliance – less than 30% in most instances
- Compliance worse at annual update than at admission
- Not an instrument issue but system/process issue
- No difference between instruments but between time intervals



Checking Compliance: After Interventions

- Compliance remains low
- More improvement at admission than at annual update
- Small number of programs improved markedly – more so at admission
- Quality of data improved with fewer errors



Proactive Data Based Approach to Improving Compliance

- Working at the local/clinic level
- Serving as consultants
- Presenting clinic data/checking for accuracy in estimation of what is expected
- Holding programs responsible for error correction
- Providing technical assistance
- Integrating system into existing processes
- Stimulating interest



Examples of What Works: Successes

- Readily available support to programs in developing in-house processes
- Quality staff dedicated to the project for each service area
- Drawing on personal relationships to encourage active participation
- Feedback on compliance rates to each program at regular intervals



Conclusions

- Top management must hold program managers accountable
- System should be designed so that probability of successes is maximized:
 - Use existing data when possible
 - Minimize complexity
 - Sample when feasible
 - Integrate data collection into existing procedures
 - Dedicate staff – both quality and program
 - Collect only data responsive to specific needs
“Ask the right questions”
 - Be parsimonious