

**Qualified Mental Health Associates (QMHA) &
Qualified Mental Health Professionals (QMHP) –
UPDATED TO REFLECT ISSR RULE CHANGES EFFECTIVE JAN 01, 2012**

Common Questions and Answers

1. What is a QMHA?

According to OAR 309-032-1505 (104), a "Qualified Mental Health Associate (QMHA)" means a person delivering services under the direct supervision of a QMHP and meeting the following minimum qualifications as authorized by the LMHA or designee:

- (a) Bachelor's degree in a behavioral sciences field; or
- (b) A combination of at least three years relevant work, education, training or experience."

Additionally, OAR 309-032-1520 (2)(e) defines minimum competencies for QMHA's: "QMHA's must demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively, understand mental health assessment, treatment and service terminology and apply each of these concepts, implement skills development strategies, and identify, implement and coordinate the services and supports identified in an ISSP.

2. What is a QMHP?

According to OAR 309-032-1505:(105), a "Qualified Mental Health Professional (QMHP)" means a LMP or any other person meeting one or more of the following minimum qualifications as authorized by the LMHA or designee:

- (a) Bachelor's degree in nursing and licensed by the State of Oregon;
- (b) Bachelor's degree in occupational therapy and licensed by the State of Oregon;
- (c) Graduate degree in psychology;
- (d) Graduate degree in social work;
- (e) Graduate degree in recreational, art, or music therapy; or
- (f) Graduate degree in a behavioral science field.

Additionally, OAR 309-032-1520 (2)(f) defines minimum competencies for QMHP's: "QMHP's must demonstrate the ability to conduct an assessment, including identifying precipitating events, gathering histories of mental and physical health, alcohol and other drug use, past mental health services and criminal justice contacts, assessing family, cultural social and work relationships,

and conducting a mental status examination, complete a five-axis DSM diagnosis, write and supervise the implementation of a ISSP and provide individual, family or group therapy within the scope of their training. “

3. How does a person become a QMHA or QMHP?

In order to receive the designation as a QMHA or a QMHP the person must meet minimum Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR) criteria. The Community Mental Health Provider determines who is qualified under the rule and requirement and as such is subject to review by the state (e.g., during site reviews) as described in OAR 309-032-1500 through 309-032-1565.

According to 309-032-1520 (2), Specific Program Staff Competencies MUST include the following specified program staff:

(e) QMHAs must demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively, understand mental health assessment, treatment and service terminology and apply each of these concepts, implement skills development strategies, and identify, implement and coordinate the services and supports identified in an ISSP.

(f) QMHPs must demonstrate the ability to conduct an assessment, including identifying precipitating events, gathering histories of mental and physical health, alcohol and other drug use, past mental health services and criminal justice contacts, assessing family, cultural, social and work relationships, and conducting a mental status examination, complete a five- axis DSM diagnosis, write and supervise the implementation of a ISSP and provide individual, family or group therapy within the scope of their training.

4. Who decides whether a person meets QMHA or QMHP qualifications?

The employer is responsible for assuring that an employee meets the criteria for QMHA or QMHP as defined by OARs under which the organization is certified. The Addictions and Mental Health Division (AMH) or, in the case of county subcontractors, the local county-operated mental health program (or the county contracted community mental health program) will review the qualifications of employees during periodic site reviews. Programs that employ persons as QMHAs or QMHPs who do not meet the minimum criteria as defined by the OAR may be subject to corrective action requirements or sanctions.

5. Is there any flexibility to the requirements for QMHA or QMHP?

OAR 309-032-1565 specifies the criteria and the process for variance provisions for the QMHA and QMHP designation. AMH may grant an exception to the criteria based on mitigating factors. Employers must submit a written variance

request to the AMH for approval prior to employing a person as a QMHA or QMHP if the person does not already meet criteria. Variances to the OAR requirements are rarely issued but there are circumstances under which the AMH would approve a variance request. Most commonly these circumstances include a lack of resources needed to implement the standards required in OAR and if the use of these resources would result in improved outcomes for the individuals receiving services. Requests for variances are sometimes observed in rural communities where there is a documented lack of persons who would meet QMHA or QMHP standards or persons with unique skills or abilities that are not otherwise available but are determined to be needed for the community (e.g., persons to work with non-English speaking immigrant populations).

6. Does a QMHA or QMHP need to be licensed or certified?

The answer to this is “No.” QMHAs and QMHPs are not required to be licensed or certified and the state does not issue any documentation to verify that a person meets criteria as a QMHA or QMHP. While some organizations or third party payers may require that a person be licensed, this is a completely separate from whether or not a person meets criteria as a QMHP. QMHPs may be licensed by state authorized licensing boards, such as the Board of Clinical Social Workers, the Board of Psychological Examiners, the Board of Licensed Professional Counselors & Therapists, the Board of Nursing, and the Board of Medical Examiners. However, licensure through these boards is independent of whether or not a person meets criteria as a QMHP.

7. Where can I find the OAR for QMHA & QMHP?

The website for the Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR) is maintained by the Oregon Secretary of State office. The following steps will lead you to the website for mental health rules related to QMHA & QMHP:

- Go to: <http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/banners/rules.htm>;
- Select: [*Numerical Index by OAR Chapter Number*](#);
- Type in 309-032-1500
- Click on Addictions & Mental Health Division
- Click on Division 31-32
- Scroll down to Division 32: “Community Treatment and Support Services. Mental Health Services for Homeless Individuals.”
- Scroll down to Integrated Services and Support Rules: 309-032-1500 through 309-032-1565.

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