The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) Criteria

Fact Sheet

October 2015

To ensure beneficiaries have access to the full continuum of care for substance use disorder (SUD) treatment, the array of benefits offered through the Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System (DMC-ODS) Waiver are modeled after the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) Criteria.

What is the American Society of Addiction Medicine?

Founded in 1954, ASAM is a professional society representing over 3,600 physicians, clinicians, and associated professionals in the field of addiction medicine. ASAM is dedicated to increasing access and improving the quality of addiction treatment, educating physicians and the public, supporting research and prevention, and promoting the appropriate role of physicians in the care of patients with addiction.

What is the ASAM Criteria?

The ASAM Criteria, formerly known as the ASAM patient placement criteria, is the result of a collaboration that began in the 1980s to define one national set of criteria for providing outcome-orientated and results-based care in the treatment of addiction. The ASAM Criteria is most widely used and comprehensive set of guidelines for placement, continued stay and transfer/discharge of patients with addiction and co-occurring conditions.

What are the benefits of using the ASAM Criteria?

- The ASAM Criteria was created to improve the quality of and access to addiction care, and is a proven model in the SUD field.
- The ASAM Criteria is a single, common standard for assessing patient needs, optimizing placement, determining medical necessity, and documenting the appropriateness of reimbursement.
- The ASAM Criteria provides a consensus based model of placement criteria and matches a patient's severity of SUD illness with treatment levels that run a continuum marked by five basic levels of care.
- The principles, concepts, and criteria of the ASAM Criteria promote good stewardship of resources in the addiction, mental health, and general health care systems.