



**ASAM** American Society of  
Addiction Medicine

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## A Message on Protecting the Integrity of The ASAM Criteria

**Rockville, MD (April 16, 2019)** – The ongoing opioid crisis has awakened the public conscience to systemic challenges within the addiction treatment field. This increased awareness and attention has led legislators and policymakers across the country to explore new strategies for increasing the adoption of clinical standards of care.

The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) has been a leader in the movement to transform America's addiction treatment infrastructure and expand access to high-quality care. Almost 40 years ago, ASAM led a coalition of expert stakeholders to develop the first set of nationally recognized, research-validated standards – [The ASAM Criteria](#)<sup>®</sup> – to provide outcome-oriented and results-based care for addiction treatment.

Today, *The ASAM Criteria* is the nation's most respected, comprehensive set of guidelines used to match patients to the right level of care. It is utilized by clinicians and payers across care settings and in treatment system reform efforts in states across the country. ASAM strongly supports the expanded use of national clinical standards of care, including *The ASAM Criteria*, throughout the addiction treatment system.

However, efforts to promote adoption of *The ASAM Criteria* have led to increased numbers of providers and payers claiming to use these standards, sparking concerns about whether they are being implemented with fidelity. ASAM is seeing a growing trend of unapproved use and misuse of *The ASAM Criteria* by some treatment providers who are not offering evidence-based care. These actions threaten the long-term integrity of *The ASAM Criteria* and create confusion for patients and families seeking high-quality treatment.

**These concerns require action.** In order to protect patients and preserve the credibility of providers accurately implementing *The ASAM Criteria*, ASAM has begun to develop a range of programs to support effective implementation of *The ASAM Criteria* and protect ASAM's intellectual property from misuse. These programs include an [ASAM Level of Care certification program](#) delivered by CARF, a robust [training program](#) on *The ASAM Criteria*, and ongoing enhancements to the [ASAM CONTINUUM](#) software – a clinical decision support tool used to assist in treatment planning for individuals with addiction.

Beginning this spring, *The ASAM Criteria* copyright permissions process will also be updated to include fair use guidelines and permission agreements to enable public entities, providers, and other stakeholders to reference their use of *The ASAM Criteria*. **More information on ASAM's permissions process can be found at: [www.ASAM.org/copyright-and-permissions](http://www.ASAM.org/copyright-and-permissions).**

These changes are meant to give healthcare systems the tools they need to successfully demonstrate fidelity to *The ASAM Criteria* and ultimately promote the continued delivery of quality, evidence-based care. ASAM has a responsibility – to providers, payers, regulators, patients and their families – to ensure *The ASAM Criteria* continues to stand for nationally recognized standards of care in addiction treatment. While we understand that this will be a transition for the field, we are committed to working closely with providers, states and payers to support a smooth transition.

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### **About ASAM**

The American Society of Addiction Medicine, founded in 1954, is a professional society representing over 6,000 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. For more information, visit [www.ASAM.org](http://www.ASAM.org).

### **About The ASAM Criteria**

The ASAM Criteria is the nation's most widely used and comprehensive set of guidelines for placement, continued stay, and transfer/discharge of patients with addiction and co-occurring conditions. Utilized by clinicians and payers across all care settings, the use of the ASAM Criteria is required in more than 30 states. Addiction treatment programs use the criteria to conduct a multi-dimensional patient assessment over five broad levels of treatment that are based on the degree of direct medical management provided, the structure, safety and security provided, and the intensity of treatment services provided. The criteria focuses on six dimensions of patient care to create a holistic, biopsychosocial assessment of an individual. This assessment is used for service planning and treatment across all services and levels of care. Learn more at <https://www.asam.org/resources/the-asam-criteria>.