

Recommendation Title: ASAM Criteria Training and Use of ASAM CONTINUUM

- **Issue Summary:** <<Insert 1 to 5 sentences here reflecting the background, key issues, needs, gaps and challenges. Because significant work has already been done to explore needs, please be succinct. Link to pertinent documents summarizing it.>>

The passage of Senate Bill 20-007 mandates that every health benefit plan operating in Colorado must provide coverage “at a minimum, for treatment of substance use disorders in accordance with the American Society of Addiction Medicine Criteria for placement, medical necessity, and utilization management determinations.”

Because staff of health benefit plans are not acquainted with this new law and are not trained in the ASAM criteria for use in making determination of services, there is a need for mandatory training to ensure individuals in need of treatment for a substance use disorder (SUD) are properly covered for services in accordance with the ASAM Criteria.

Implementing the ASAM Criteria and requiring that services meet medical necessity requirements are big shifts for the SUD treatment field. Within the ASAM Criteria’s implementation process, the state’s role is to provide guidance to health benefit plans and providers, and to create opportunities for training and engagement by directly sponsoring training or other events supportive of ASAM.

The effective implementation of ASAM criteria by state and private health benefit plans and providers can be standardized by utilizing the evidence-based ASAM CONTINUUM toolkit for effective implementation.

- **Transformative Outcome(s):** <<Indicate what you expect the recommendation will achieve to address the issue and how that is transformative.>>
 - Increased initial patient engagement.
 - Better patient retention in treatment over time.
 - Less substance use disorder severity.
 - Lower hospital utilization.

- Reducing staff hours by speeding up telephonic prior authorization.
- Gaining easier approvals for payer reimbursement.
- Greater success securing treatment funding with public (block grant & Medicaid) and commercial payers.

Use of a common model for client assessment and placement can increase the likelihood that clients receive comparable and clinically indicated treatment across providers. The use of ASAM Criteria by both providers and the state or utilization review staff, can enhance decisions regarding the appropriate level of care for a client. If a standardized, evidence-based tool is used to match patients to care, studies indicate that providers will obtain better patient clinical outcomes.

The use of the ASAM Criteria promotes individualized care.

In the area of Medicaid, the use of the ASAM Criteria for determining levels of care and coverage will help to achieve the goals of the 1115 waiver demonstrations, which include: improving access to high quality care; promoting efficiencies; supporting coordinated strategies; increasing beneficiary engagement; enhancing alignment between Medicaid policies and commercial health insurance; and advancing innovative delivery system and payment models.

Recommendation: <<Summarize the recommendation, indicating if it is a policy and/or funding recommendation.>>

- Provide training for state and private health benefit plan staff and SUD treatment providers in implementing the ASAM Criteria for determination of placement, utilization review and management. Trainings can occur through multiple methods including in-person trainings, webinars, and with the regular release of frequently asked questions (FAQs).
- Adopt and utilize the standardized, evidence-based CONTINUUM Toolkit for effective implementation of the ASAM Criteria in Colorado.
- Fund the current Circle Programs (n=3) over the next 4 years for the 90-day treatment stays intended by the legislature when the SUD benefit was passed. This funding would allow each of the 3 Circle Programs to provide up to a 90 day residential treatment regimen over the next 4 years for any client meeting 3.7 or 3.5 ASAM criteria and the resultant intensive treatment and discharge planning required for this high risk clientele. Funding request: \$20M

Recommended funding: TBD

- **Justification:** <<If additional info is needed, add justification. For funding recommendations, indicate the following as appropriate:
 - Justification for one time investment.
 - Extent to which additional dollars could be leveraged
 - Ability to spend money within the given timeframe. >>

Utilization review (UR)/utilization management is the process by which the state Medicaid program and health benefit plans ensure that beneficiaries receive medically appropriate services as a way to promote both quality of care and efficient use of resources by eliminating unnecessary utilization. UR decisions can encompass services, procedures, and settings or facilities. In most cases, review of SUD treatment is done through prospective review or prior authorization.

The ASAM criteria is the most widely used and comprehensive set of guidelines for placement, continued stay and transfer/discharge of patients with addiction and co-occurring conditions.

The ASAM Criteria provide a common language for both providers and payers when determining the severity of a patient's problems, the different levels or settings of the treatment modalities offered, and the criteria for patient placement within the continuum of SUD treatment. These criteria not only described patient characteristics that might warrant inpatient care but also provided guidelines for different types of outpatient treatment and outlined the process of moving across different levels of care.

ASAM CONTINUUM is a computerized structured interview and clinical decision support system. It provides the entire treatment team with a computer-guided, structured interview for assessing and caring for patients with substance use disorders and co-occurring conditions.

- **Policy Recommendation:** See above