



ASAM 3.5 - Provider Frequently Asked Questions

1. American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) definitions:

ASAM 3.7

- Medically Monitored High Intensity Inpatient Services for adolescents
- Medically Monitored Intensive Inpatient Services for adults

ASAM 3.7-WM

- Medically Monitored Inpatient Withdrawal Management for adults

ASAM 3.5

- Clinically Managed Medium-Intensity Residential Services for adolescents
- Clinically Managed High-Intensity Residential Services for adults

2. What is changing?

Optum is implementing and providing coverage for ASAM Residential Level 3.5 for Substance Use Disorders. ASAM is the clinical criteria Optum uses to make benefit determination decisions for substance use disorder treatment. Optum current Commercial residential treatment contracts align more closely with ASAM residential level 3.7.

Optum moved to the use of ASAM for all Commercial plans on January 1, 2020. Please review ASAM Clinical Criteria in the Guidelines/Policies for additional information on Provider Express (providerexpress.com > [Clinical Resources](#) > [Guidelines/Policies & Manuals](#) > [Guidelines/Policies](#) > [ASAM Criteria](#))

3. When will contract updates begin?

Starting January 1, 2021 Optum will begin making contract updates to the existing network and contracting for new Providers offering ASAM residential level 3.5.

4. What impact does this have on Facility Participation Agreements?

If a Facility is currently contracted to provide Residential Treatment Services, Optum may need to update the participation agreement to distinguish between ASAM residential level 3.7 WM, level 3.7 and/or 3.5. A new payment appendix will be required to make the change.

If the Facility provides ASAM residential levels 3.7 or 3.5 and is already CARF *level of care certified*, a site audit will not be required or additional information to add this level of care. CARF *level of care certification* is preferred but is not required for contracting purposes.

If a Facility is not accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting entity like The Joint Commission (JCAHO) or Commission on Accreditation on Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), a site audit will be required.

5. Will rates be impacted?

For ASAM 3.7 level of care service, there will be no change in current reimbursement.

For ASAM 3.5 level of care services, these services are considered a step-down level of care from 3.7 and thus are reimbursed at a lower rate.

6. Why does ASAM define Level 3.7 as Inpatient but Optum contracts for ASAM 3.7 as a Residential level of care?

The ASAM criteria was not written for health plans or insurance coverage. ASAM was written to improve assessment and outcomes-driven treatment and recovery services. It is used to match patients to appropriate types and levels of care.

ASAM provides definition to specific levels of care within substance use treatment, services that make up the care and how those services are evaluated within the six dimensions to determine patient placement.

ASAM utilizes the term “Inpatient” to designate services that have a medical oversight. Residential services, as defined by ASAM, are services that do not provide medical oversight.

7. Why is Optum changing Provider contracts at this time?

As part of the ASAM alignment that Optum started in 2019, there was insufficient time to revise all Facility contracts. At this time Optum is reviewing all relevant contracts to identify and update program levels in accordance with ASAM guidelines, as warranted.

8. Will these levels require Peer Reviews?

There is an expectation that all Providers will align to ASAM criteria when seeking authorization for services.

9. What is the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF)?

CARF is an independent, nonprofit accrediting body whose mission is to promote the quality, value, and optimal outcomes of services through a consultative accreditation process and continuous improvement services that center on enhancing the lives of persons served. This accrediting body establishes consumer-focused standards to help organizations measure and improve the quality of their programs and services.

10. Does a Facility need to become CARF Certified?

CARF level of care certification is preferred, although not required in most cases.

11. Why is Optum recommending level of care certification through CARF?

As part of the certification process, CARF evaluates a Facility's treatment program capabilities. In order to obtain certification, programs must demonstrate that they deliver services at the level of care as defined by The ASAM Criteria. Programs with CARF level of care certification will be prioritized for re-contracting.

12. How will a Facility contract for ASAM 3.5 or ASAM 3.7?

Currently contracted Facilities may receive outreach by Optum staff or may require contract updates during their next re-credentialing cycle. If a Facility expresses interest in contracting for these ASAM levels, they can contact their contracting representative for additional information or call the Provider Services Line at **1-877-614-0484**.

New Facilities will be able to contract for ASAM 3.5 or ASAM 3.7 at the time of their initial contracting and credentialing.