



Optum Behavioral Health begins to implement *ASAM Criteria 4th Edition* guidelines for the treatment of adults with addiction

Updates apply only to services for members ages 18 and older; 3rd Edition criteria will continue to be used for adolescent services

During the remainder of 2024 and throughout 2025, Optum Behavioral Health will roll out contracting and clinical guideline changes for facilities and agencies that treat adults with addiction. The changes align our clinical guidelines and benefits with the updated *ASAM Criteria 4th Edition*.

Optum Behavioral Health uses *The ASAM Criteria* to outline our network facility and provider roles, responsibilities and requirements, as well as guidelines and protocols for treating patients with substance use disorders. The parameters help ensure members receive the treatment that best fits their needs and that resources are used wisely.

Key points you need to know

- 1. 4th Edition changes are not effective until your contract has been updated**
Optum Behavioral Health will reach out to existing network providers/facilities to update and renew participation agreements. Until you have a fully executed, updated contract, you should continue to follow 3rd Edition guidelines.
 - 2. For 2024, changes will only apply to Commercial health plans**
Various state Departments of Insurance and/or Health have indicated that Medicaid plans will not transition to the 4th Edition guidelines until Jan. 1, 2025 at the earliest. We will update you later this year when additional information is available.
 - 3. 4th Edition guidelines only apply to treatment(s) for patients ages 18+**
ASAM has focused the 4th Edition criteria on adults only. A separate set of guidelines for adolescents is in development and is expected to be released in late 2025. In addition, treatment for individuals within jails and prisons (justice-involved individuals) will continue to follow the 3rd Edition criteria. ASAM will release an individual volume for this audience over the next 2 years as well.
 - 4. Many clinical criteria and standards have been updated**
The updates reflect the current state of scientific evidence and clinical practice, and help to integrate more person-centered considerations when assessing the level of care needed. In addition:
 - The six dimensions of the ASAM Criteria were updated so that clinicians can more easily consider a patient's readiness for level of care changes.
 - Sub-dimensions reflect core actionable factors that should be assessed within each dimension for treatment planning.
 - Charts and graphics have been redesigned to distill complex concepts into simpler, clearer explanations.
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Resources to help you understand the 4th Edition

There are a number of tools available to help you understand *The ASAM Criteria 4th Edition* and adjust your protocols and processes accordingly:



Optum Behavioral Health [Quick Reference Guide](#) – outlines the most significant changes you should be aware of.



[Frequently Asked Questions](#) – Additional information and insight about the Optum Behavioral Health implementation of the 4th Edition Criteria.



ASAM Implementation Tools – A variety of tools design to help clinicians, payers and others effectively implement *The ASAM Criteria 4th edition*, including:



A set of 300+ slides on the ASAM Criteria, Fourth Edition is publicly available. To request the slides, accept [ASAM's terms and conditions](#).



Criteria Training – Live and on-demand training is available through ASAM and the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation.

- **[4th Edition Foundation Course](#)**: This 4-hour online course helps clinicians develop patient-centered service plans and make objective decisions during the level of care and treatment planning assessments.
- **[Understand the 4th Edition and its Clinical Application](#)**: Offered by the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, this 2-day virtual course reviews the updated criteria in detail. Significant time is allotted to practice applying the core components in diverse scenarios. CE and CMEs available



[The ASAM Criteria Navigator](#) – ASAM has partnered with Change Healthcare to develop software for using The ASAM Criteria in utilization review and management workflows.



[ASAM Continuum](#) – a comprehensive electronic assessment tool to assess individuals with addictive substance use disorders and co-occurring conditions. The tool leverages a computerized clinical decision support system to make level of care recommendations.



[ASAM Co-Triage](#) – a computer-guided provisional referral tool designed to generate an initial level of care placement for individuals with substance use problems.

Questions?

To support your implementation of the updated criteria, [you can purchase](#) a digital or print copy of *The ASAM Criteria 4th Edition*. For questions specific to the criteria, please [contact ASAM](#).

For questions related to your Optum Behavioral Health contract, please contact your Provider Relations Advocate or the Network Management contract representative [for your state](#).