



Louisiana Medicaid begins adoption of ASAM 4th Edition Criteria for SUD treatment

On Jan. 1, 2026, the Louisiana Department of Health began transitioning to the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) 4th Edition Criteria for adult members covered by Louisiana Medicaid.

By July 1, 2026, providers must be fully compliant with using the updated criteria to develop treatment plans, including, but not limited to, any contract amendments that may be needed..

Contract updates are required

Here's what you need to do:

Step #1: Review this [summary of ASAM 4th Edition changes](#)

Step #2: Review your UnitedHealthcare Community Plan/Optum Behavioral Health contract for the Level(s) of Care you provide.

As needed, please [submit a network application](#) with any requested and/or required documentation for the new Levels of Care. Program details, descriptions, and schedules (structured clinical services) should reflect the required ASAM clinical treatment guidelines. This includes providers who:

- Are contracted for ASAM 3.1 Level of Care where the criteria has changed.
- Will be providing the new ASAM 2.7 Level of Care

If you're currently not contracted for any ASAM Level of Care and would like to be, please [submit a network application](#) with all requested and required documents.

Note: If you are waiting for a new or updated license from the state, you don't need to wait for the license before [submitting your application and documentation](#) (select Facility or Hospital-Based). This information will be reviewed and kept on hold until the license is received.

4th Edition Criteria Info

The ASAM Criteria is the most widely used and comprehensive set of standards for placement, continued service, and transfer of patients with addiction and co-occurring conditions.

Optum Behavioral Health uses it as part of clinical decision making for substance use disorder (SUD) treatment.

ASAM has made several significant changes from the 3rd Edition to the 4th Edition Criteria:

- Several Levels of Care have been modified to better reflect the continuum of care.
There have also been changes to where specific care can be delivered and the associated licensing requirements to do so.
- Room and board has been removed from the Specialized Behavioral Health Services Fee Schedule.
- Clients with intellectual and developmental disabilities should be treated in all ASAM Levels of Care. Please consult ASAM 4th Edition Criteria Chapter 19 for guidance on managing and treating this sub-population.

Note: The change to ASAM 4th Edition Criteria currently applies to adults only. Please continue to follow ASAM 3rd Edition Criteria for children and adolescents ages 6-17 until ASAM releases new guidance later in 2026.

Resources

Please refer to the following resources for more information regarding the upcoming changes.

Louisiana-specific resources

- [LDH Informational Bulletin 25-31](#)
- [LA Medicaid Specialized Behavioral Health Fee Schedule](#)
- [LA Medicaid Behavioral Health Provider Service Definition Manual](#)

ASAM resources

- [ASAM 4th Edition Clinical Criteria Summary](#)
- [ASAM Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Questions?

For questions about the new ASAM 4th Criteria changes, please contact your assigned Provider Relations Advocate or email us at networkse@optum.com.