



## The ASAM Criteria Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Is it a requirement to utilize *The ASAM Criteria* for substance use assessments?

Yes, subcontractors of Health Choice Arizona must abide by the guidelines set forth in the AHCCCS Medical Policy Manual (AMPM)<sup>1</sup> and the Greater Arizona RBHA contract<sup>5</sup>, which state that *The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) Criteria* (Third Edition, 2013) must be utilized in substance use disorder assessments, service planning, and level of care placement. Providers are encouraged to utilize the reference links at the end of this document to view this requirements within the RBHA contract and the AMPM.

### 2. Can other assessment tools be utilized for substance use disorders?

Yes, other standardized assessment tools may be used in conjunction with an ASAM assessment; however, other assessments cannot take the place of an ASAM assessment.

### 3. How often should an ASAM assessment be completed?

Although there is no set timeline for how frequently ASAM assessments should be conducted, *The ASAM Criteria* text and the ASAM Knowledge Base online<sup>4</sup> have specific clinical guidelines for frequency of assessment. Whenever there is a change in one of the dimensions, a new assessment should be conducted to ensure the patient is receiving the most appropriate level of care. Progress within all six dimensions should be reassessed at regular intervals based upon the patient's situation, severity, and current level of care. There are also suggestions within *The ASAM Criteria* text as to what these intervals might look like for different levels of care. Please refer to page 110 of *The ASAM Criteria* text and the online Knowledge Base<sup>4</sup> for this detailed information.

### 4. Does Relapse constitute the need for ASAM reassessment?

Before relying on clinical judgement to determine when a patient requires reassessment, ensure there is a clear distinction between Continued Use and Relapse – these terms are clearly defined in *The ASAM Criteria* text and should be considered in depth before categorizing relapse. If there is indeed a relapse event, this may indicate a change in one or more Dimensions, and a change in any Dimension constitutes a need for reassessment.

### 5. Can ASAM be used to assess adolescents?

Yes, *The ASAM Criteria* text has an adolescent-specific crosswalk (matrix) and there are adolescent-specific considerations highlighted throughout the book.

### 6. Can the ASAM CONTINUUM<sup>®</sup> be used to assess adolescents?

ASAM is in the process of developing an adolescent-specific continuum within the ASAM CONTINUUM<sup>®</sup>; however, the current ASAM CONTINUUM<sup>®</sup> can be used for adolescents. It should be noted that ASAM recommends using clinical judgement and keeping in mind that some questions may be interpreted differently for adolescents within the ASAM CONTINUUM<sup>®</sup>.

### 7. Can the ASAM CONTINUUM<sup>®</sup> be used to assess individuals who do not have an AHCCCS ID?

Yes, there is a work-around so the ASAM CONTINUUM<sup>®</sup> can be used for all individuals under a Provider's care. Please refer to AHCCCS' AZ WITS & ASAM CONTINUUM<sup>®</sup> FAQs<sup>2</sup>.



An Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association

## 8. Does the ASAM CONTINUUM® have to be used to conduct ASAM assessments?

At this time, there is no contract requirement for subcontractors to use the ASAM CONTINUUM®; however, there are multiple benefits to using this software program and it may be mandated in future contract years. This program not only simplifies the ASAM assessment process by computerizing the level of care recommendation, but it can take the place of an additional biopsychosocial assessment, as it includes questions to address these items. We encourage providers to stay up-to-date on the phased-in implementation of the ASAM CONTINUUM® and ask questions about the ASAM CONTINUUM® to both Health Choice Arizona and AHCCCS as they arise.

## 9. If the ASAM CONTINUUM® is not used, how should ASAM assessments be conducted?

Providers may continue to utilize their current process for conducting ASAM assessments as long as it is based upon the Third Edition of *The ASAM Criteria*. This may include a build-out in the Provider's current electronic health record system, use of the crosswalks within *The ASAM Criteria* text, use of another online tool, or some combination of these.

## 10. If Providers do not use the ASAM CONTINUUM® are they subject to Copyright violation?

As long as Providers are abiding by the Copyright, Permissions, and Fair Use guidelines<sup>3</sup> set forth by ASAM it is unlikely there will be any violations. Providers should review these guidelines on a regular basis. Specific questions on this should be directed to Providers' legal counsel and ASAM directly.

## 11. Will Providers' use of ASAM or the ASAM CONTINUUM® be assessed through an audit or fidelity review?

According to AHCCCS Medical Policy Manual (AMPM)<sup>1</sup> and the Greater Arizona RBHA contract<sup>5</sup>, Health Choice Arizona is responsible for monitoring the fidelity of ASAM implementation and is required to report on this to AHCCCS as requested.

### References:

1. AHCCCS Medical Policy Manual (AMPM) Chapter 900, Section 910, page 5 of 18:  
<https://www.azahcccs.gov/shared/Downloads/MedicalPolicyManual/900/910.pdf>
2. ASAM CONTINUUM® FAQs:  
<https://www.azahcccs.gov/PlansProviders/Downloads/CurrentProviders/ASAMCONTINUUMFAQ.pdf>
3. ASAM Copyright & Permission FAQs: <https://www.asam.org/copyright-and-permissions/copyright-and-permission-faqs>
4. ASAM Knowledge Base: <https://www.asamcontinuum.org/knowledgebase/how-often-should-patients-be-assessed-during-treatment/>
5. Title XIX/XXI RBHA Contract Amendment #11 (GAZ), page 92 of 354:  
[https://www.azahcccs.gov/Resources/Downloads/ContractAmendments/RBHAs/YH170001\\_RBHA\\_GAZ\\_AMD13.pdf](https://www.azahcccs.gov/Resources/Downloads/ContractAmendments/RBHAs/YH170001_RBHA_GAZ_AMD13.pdf)

### Additional Resources:

- ASAM Memo from April 2019: [https://www.asam.org/docs/default-source/quality-science/copyright-permission-newsletter-announcement.pdf?sfvrsn=58f54ac2\\_4](https://www.asam.org/docs/default-source/quality-science/copyright-permission-newsletter-announcement.pdf?sfvrsn=58f54ac2_4)
- AHCCCS webpage for ASAM CONTINUUM®:  
<https://www.azahcccs.gov/PlansProviders/CurrentProviders/ASAM.html>