

ASAM Criteria Intake Assessment Guide

Overview

The ASAM Criteria plays a pivotal role in guiding patient assessment and treatment planning for addiction and co-occurring conditions. This guide explains its importance and practical application.

The ASAM Criteria provides a comprehensive framework for assessing and treating individuals with substance use disorders (SUDs) and co-occurring conditions. It emphasizes a multidimensional approach, considering various aspects of an individual's life and health.

When to Use the ASAM Criteria

This checklist is a tool to identify potential signs and symptoms indicating the need for an ASAM Criteria assessment. It is not exhaustive and should be used in conjunction with professional judgment and patient interviews. If multiple indicators are present, consider conducting a comprehensive assessment using the ASAM Criteria to determine the appropriate level of care and treatment plan.

Substance Use Indicators

- Frequent or heavy use of substances (alcohol, prescription drugs, illegal drugs)
- Increased tolerance to substances
- Withdrawal symptoms when not using substances
- Unsuccessful attempts to quit or reduce substance use
- Continued use despite physical or psychological problems caused by substances
- Neglect of responsibilities at work, school, or home due to substance use
- Using substances in physically hazardous situations (e.g., driving)

Behavioral and Emotional Signs

- Changes in behavior, mood, or personality
- Agitation, irritability, or aggression
- Depressive symptoms, anxiety, or other mental health changes
- Social withdrawal or change in social networks
- Legal problems related to substance use
- Financial difficulties due to substance use

Physical Health Indicators

- Unexplained weight loss or gain

- Noticeable decline in personal hygiene or appearance
- Physical health complaints (e.g., liver problems, gastrointestinal issues, cardiovascular complications)
- Sleep disturbances or changes in energy levels
- Needle marks or signs of drug paraphernalia

Readiness to Change

- Patient expresses desire or ambivalence about changing substance use
- Prior attempts at treatment or recovery
- Acknowledgment of substance use issues

Relapse Potential

- History of relapse after periods of recovery
- Exposure to high-risk environments or triggers
- Lack of a support system or coping mechanisms

Recovery/Living Environment

- Supportive or unsupportive home environment
- Exposure to substance use in the living environment
- Stability of housing and access to recovery resources

Other Considerations

- Co-occurring mental health disorders
- Family history of substance use disorders
- Age, gender, and cultural factors affecting substance use and treatment

Pre-Assessment Preparation

Document Review

The ASAM Criteria® Assessment Interview Guide, a collaborative effort between the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) and UCLA, standardizes the assessment process. It ensures quality and consistency in patient assessments and treatment recommendations in SUD treatment.

Review and access the full ASAM Criteria document [here](#).

Assessment Process

Patient Engagement

- **Building Rapport:** Establish a trusting environment.
- **Explaining the Assessment:** Clarify the purpose and process to the patient.

Gathering Information

- **Personal and Medical History:** Obtain a comprehensive health background.
- **Substance Use History:** Document types, frequency, and impact of substance use.
- **Psychiatric History:** Explore mental health conditions.
- **Social and Environmental Factors:** Assess the patient's living situation and social support.

Follow the ASAM Criteria Document through the Six Dimensions

1. **Dimension 1: Acute Intoxication and/or Withdrawal Potential**
2. **Dimension 2: Biomedical Conditions and Complications**
3. **Dimension 3: Emotional, Behavioral, or Cognitive Conditions and Complications**
4. **Dimension 4: Readiness to Change**
5. **Dimension 5: Relapse, Continued Use, or Continued Problem Potential**
6. **Dimension 6: Recovery/Living Environment**

Risk Assessment

- **Assessing Severity and Urgency:** Evaluate each dimension's impact.
- **Identifying Immediate Risks or Needs:** Highlight areas requiring prompt attention.

Formulating a Treatment Plan

Integrating Assessment Findings

Synthesize information from all dimensions to understand the patient's comprehensive needs. This holistic view aids in creating an effective and personalized treatment plan that addresses all aspects of the patient's condition.

Setting Priorities

Determine the most pressing needs or risks to address initially. Prioritization ensures that the most critical aspects of the patient's condition are managed first, providing a foundation for successful long-term treatment.

Treatment Recommendations

Match patient needs with the appropriate levels of care and specific interventions. This includes:

- **Determining the Level of Care:** Choose between outpatient, inpatient, residential, or other

specialized care based on the severity and specific requirements of the patient's condition.

- **Specific Interventions:** Recommend therapies such as cognitive-behavioral therapy, medication-assisted treatment, group therapy, or family counseling, tailored to the patient's unique needs.
- **Lifestyle and Supportive Measures:** Advise on supportive services, lifestyle changes, and community resources that can aid in recovery and relapse prevention.

Documentation and Collaboration

Recording Findings

- **Detailed and Accurate Records:** Maintain thorough documentation of assessments, treatment plans, and progress notes.
- **Confidentiality and Compliance:** Ensure that all documentation is compliant with legal and ethical standards, particularly regarding patient confidentiality.

Multidisciplinary Approach

- **Team Collaboration:** Work in conjunction with other healthcare professionals, such as physicians, psychiatrists, therapists, and social workers, to provide comprehensive care.
- **Family and Community Involvement:** Encourage the involvement of family members and community resources as part of a supportive treatment network.
- **Continuous Communication:** Establish regular communication channels among all parties involved in the patient's care for effective coordination and adjustment of the treatment plan as needed.

Ongoing Assessment

Monitoring and Adjusting Treatment

- **Regular Reassessment:** Conduct periodic evaluations to monitor the patient's response to treatment, ensuring that the plan remains effective and relevant.
- **Adaptive Treatment Plans:** Be prepared to modify the treatment plan based on reassessment findings. This could involve changing therapy types, adjusting medication dosages, or shifting the level of care.
- **Tracking Progress:** Utilize tools and metrics to quantitatively and qualitatively measure the patient's progress, such as symptom checklists, functional assessments, and substance use monitoring.
- **Client Feedback:** Actively seek the patient's input on their treatment experience and any changes in their condition, preferences, or goals.

Addressing Changes in Patient's Condition

- **Responsive Care:** Quickly respond to any new challenges or changes in the patient's condition, such as relapse, changes in mental health status, or life circumstances.
- **Crisis Management:** Implement strategies for crisis intervention when necessary, such as in cases of acute withdrawal, suicidal ideation, or other emergencies.
- **Support System Engagement:** Engage the patient's support system, including family and

community resources, in response to changes in their condition.

Notes:

Resources and Further Reading

- [The ASAM Criteria](#)
- [National Institute on Drug Abuse \(NIDA\)](#)
- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#)
- [Journal of Addiction Medicine](#)
- [Continuing Education Opportunities](#)

References:

- [ASAM Criteria Intake Assessment Guide](#)