

MAUD and ASAM 4th Edition

General Overview

Behavioral health systems are evolving to better address the complex needs of individuals with substance use disorders. This transformation emphasizes expanding access to evidence-based treatments, integrating behavioral and physical health services, and adopting updated clinical standards that reflect current science and best practices. Federal and state initiatives, including Medicaid policies and clinical guidelines like the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) Criteria, play a vital role in supporting these efforts. Leveraging these resources effectively is essential for building resilient, equitable systems of care that promote recovery and improve outcomes for individuals living with substance use disorders including alcohol use disorder (AUD).

Medications for Alcohol Use Disorder (MAUD)

Overview

MAUD are evidence-based treatments that can significantly improve recovery outcomes. Since the FDA approved the first medication in 1949, four medications have been approved to treat AUD, including naltrexone (oral and extended-release injectable), acamprosate, and disulfiram.

Key Insights

1. Benefits of MAUD

- Improve abstinence and reduce alcohol cravings
- Decrease alcohol consumption
- Support long-term recovery

2. Current Challenges

- Less than 2% of individuals with AUD receive medication-assisted treatment
- Barriers include limited coverage by health plans and persistent stigma around medication use
- Only 1.9% of the over 28 million people with AUD in the past year received medications

3. Opportunities for Improvement

- **Expand access and coverage:** States and payers should review formularies to ensure medications are accessible and affordable.
- **Provider education:** Increase awareness of the benefits of MAUD and the latest clinical standards.
- **Reduce stigma:** Normalize medication-assisted recovery through education for providers and beneficiaries.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** Involve individuals with lived experience, providers, and community organizations.
- **Leverage technology:** Use data sharing, telehealth, and care coordination tools to improve access and continuity.

Why This Matters

Addressing AUD with evidence-based treatments like MAUD can reduce mortality, improve quality of life, and support sustained recovery. Expanding access and reducing stigma are critical steps toward closing treatment gaps and ensuring equitable care.

American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) Criteria 4th Edition

Overview

The ASAM Criteria 4th Edition introduces significant updates to standards for addiction treatment, emphasizing a comprehensive, person-centered approach. It provides a collaborative framework for clinicians, providers, payers, and policymakers to ensure consistent, high-quality care.

Key Insights

- **Core Components & Six Dimensions:** The updated standards include newly defined subdimensions and a focus on the continuum of care.
- **Integrated Care:** Increased emphasis on integrating behavioral and physical health services, including updates for co-occurring disorders and withdrawal management.
- **Population-Specific Considerations:** Special sections support tailored care for pregnant women, older adults, and justice-involved populations.
- **Chronic Care Model:** Supports a long-term, recovery-oriented approach that adapts to individuals' changing needs.
- **Access & Harm Reduction:** Promotes improved access to medically necessary levels of care, medication, harm reduction strategies, and recovery support services.

Implications for States & Providers

- Transition planning from ASAM 3rd to 4th Edition involves analyzing current service systems, coverage policies, licensure rules, and stakeholder engagement.
- Development of implementation plans, success metrics, and cost analysis are essential.
- Service definitions, provider networks, utilization management criteria, and Medicaid waivers may require updates to align with new standards.

Why This Matters

The updated ASAM Criteria support a flexible, integrated, and person-centered approach to addiction treatment, fostering better outcomes and expanded access. States and providers are encouraged to adapt their systems to these standards to improve care quality and efficiency.

Caveats and Limitations

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For More Information

For tailored support and strategic guidance on advancing behavioral health initiatives for children and youth, contact [Starleen Scott Robbins](#) or [Dr. Jason Vogler](#), or email us at: mercer.government@mercer.com.

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