DATE:

Behavioral Health Information Notice No: 24-XXX

TO: California Alliance of Child and Family Services
California Association for Alcohol/Drug Educators
California Association of Alcohol & Drug Program Executives, Inc.
California Association of DUI Treatment Programs
California Association of Social Rehabilitation Agencies
California Consortium of Addiction Programs and Professionals
California Council of Community Behavioral Health Agencies
California Hospital Association
California Opioid Maintenance Providers
California State Association of Counties
Coalition of Alcohol and Drug Associations
County Behavioral Health Directors
County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California
County Drug & Alcohol Administrators

SUBJECT: Drug Medi-Cal (DMC) and Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System (DMC-ODS) American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) Assessment Tools

PURPOSE: To postpone implementation of specified DMC and DMC-ODS Assessment requirements included in BHIN 23-068.

REFERENCE: Welfare & Institutions Code (W&I), § 14184.402, subd. (h)(3)

BACKGROUND:
As part of the California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal initiative, the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) released BHIN 23-068, which updated documentation requirements for Specialty Mental Health, DMC, and DMC-ODS delivery systems.[1] BHIN 23-068 requires providers to use an ASAM Criteria assessment for DMC and DMC-ODS members. BHIN 23-068 further requires DMC and DMC-ODS providers to begin using either the free ASAM Criteria® Assessment Interview Guide or ASAM CONTINUUM software, or a validated tool subsequently approved by DHCS and added to the list of approved DMC and DMC-ODS ASAM assessment tools, effective January 1, 2025.

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[1] W&I § 14184.402(a), (e), and (i).

California Department of Health Care Services
Deputy Director's Office, Behavioral Health
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State of California
Gavin Newsom, Governor
California Health and Human Services Agency

Both the ASAM Criteria® Assessment Interview Guide and ASAM CONTINUUM software were created utilizing the ASAM Criteria 3rd Edition. After the release of BHIN 23-068, ASAM published an updated volume of their criteria, ASAM Criteria 4th Edition. Currently, the ASAM Criteria® Assessment Interview Guide and ASAM CONTINUUM software are being updated to reflect the ASAM Criteria 4th Edition.

In order to reduce administrative burden on DMC counties and DMC-ODS plans and allow sufficient time for implementation of new assessment tools based on ASAM's 4th Edition criteria, DHCS is superseding, in part, the DMC and DMC-ODS ASAM Criteria assessment policy provided at (a)(3)(v) on page 5 within BHIN 23-068.

POLICY:
Applicability
The policy outlined in this BHIN applies to DMC counties, DMC-ODS plans, and providers of DMC and DMC-ODS services.

Overarching Policy
DMC and DMC-ODS Assessments
This BHIN postpones the requirement for DMC counties, DMC-ODS plans, and providers to implement one of the two ASAM assessment tools mentioned above (or a validated tool subsequently approved by DHCS and added to the list of approved DMC and DMC-ODS ASAM assessment tools) effective January 1, 2025.

DMC counties, DMC-ODS plans, and providers may continue to utilize ASAM assessment tools that are currently in use, including but not limited to the free ASAM Criteria® Assessment Interview Guide or ASAM CONTINUUM software, until forthcoming DHCS guidance is released and updated tools utilizing the ASAM Criteria 4th Edition are available and can be implemented statewide. An implementation date will be specified in future DHCS guidance.

All other policy and guidance not aforementioned and provided in BHIN 23-068 remains in effect and unaffected by the policy and guidance within this BHIN.

Questions regarding this BHIN may be directed to BHCalAIM@dhcs.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Ivan Bhardwaj, Chief
Medi-Cal Behavioral Health – Policy Division

Michele Wong, Chief

Behavioral Health Oversight & Monitoring Division