

DATE: December 23, 2024

Behavioral Health Information Notice No: 24-045

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.<sup>1</sup> 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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<sup>1</sup> W&I § 14184.402(a), (e), and (i)

Both the [ASAM Criteria® Assessment Interview Guide](#) and [ASAM CONTINUUM](#) software were created utilizing the ASAM Criteria 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. After the release of BHIN 23-068, ASAM published an updated volume of their criteria, ASAM Criteria 4<sup>th</sup> Edition.

Currently, the [ASAM Criteria® Assessment Interview Guide](#) and [ASAM CONTINUUM](#) software are being updated to reflect the ASAM Criteria 4<sup>th</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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 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.

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 4<sup>th</sup> Edition are available and can be implemented statewide. An implementation date will be specified in future DHCS guidance.

All other policy and guidance provided in [BHIN 23-068](#) remains in effect and unaffected by the policy and guidance in this BHIN. Questions regarding this BHIN may be directed to [BHCalAIM@dhcs.ca.gov](mailto:BHCalAIM@dhcs.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Ivan Bhardwaj, Chief

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Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Policy Division

Michele Wong, Chief  
Behavioral Health Oversight & Monitoring Division