



November 22, 2017

Dear Partners and Stakeholders,

I am writing to update you on the Commonwealth's transition to the ASAM Criteria placement guidelines. The Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP) is progressing with this transition and remains on track for full implementation as of July 1, 2108. Some unexpected circumstances have arisen since I first announced we would be making this change. These circumstances, which are outlined for you below, have driven the project in a slightly different direction from a training perspective and I'd like for you to understand the evolution of our decision-making process.

In June, DDAP's ASAM Transition Workgroup attended a 2-day, in-person ASAM Criteria training. This training, conducted by ASAM's official training partner, the Change Companies™, was of exceptional quality and reminded each of us about the importance of proper training and implementation of these guidelines. Shortly after that training, DDAP was made aware of recently published ASAM copyright restrictions which make the creation of a Pennsylvania-specific ASAM training cost-prohibitive. Reflecting on the outstanding content of the in-person training, realizing the importance of the classroom exchange, and valuing the practical and clinical differences between applying the PCPC and the ASAM Criteria, DDAP determined that all ASAM Criteria training will be obtained through the Change Companies™.

Individuals working in the SUD treatment and case management field whose primary, day-to-day work function involves assessment and level of care placement who have not previously had ASAM Criteria, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition training must have the 2-day, in-person training. The in-person training is critical to ensure trainees understand the concepts and can apply them. The ASAM Criteria is not a checklist based tool and requires the assessor to make determinations using the criteria and their knowledge of each individual patient, therefore, high quality training is extremely important. For individuals in the field who would like an introduction to the ASAM Criteria, but who do not directly apply it, the web-based training modules are a good option. This may include management team members or nursing staff who do not do level of care placement.

While the in-person classes are the best training option available to Pennsylvania's SUD field, they do come at a cost. Unfortunately, DDAP does not have the means to pay for an effort of this magnitude, despite potential price reductions based on regional scheduling as described in the attached ASAM FAQ, due to the volume of attendees. We do recognize that strong partnerships exist within the field between SCAs, BH-MCOs, HealthChoices contract administrators, treatment providers, etc. that can assist in making the cost more manageable. I urge you to immediately contact your SCA and BH-MCO to discuss options related to timeline of training delivery, scheduling, and cost. To aid in your discussions, contact information for the Change Companies™ can be found at the following link: <https://www.changecompanies.net/>. Also, DDAP's training department will maintain a master schedule of the classes being scheduled and can assist in collaborating to ensure all classes are full.

I realize that this is a notable change to the way training has been offered in the past, and while DDAP will continue to investigate funding assistance opportunities, we do believe that the ASAM Criteria training and transition to the use of this criteria will be of great benefit in providing quality care and services to Pennsylvanians in need of substance use disorder services. We will continue to work collaboratively with you to address concerns, however, I felt it was important to inform you and remain transparent about the decision-making process. I want to thank you for working as a unified system of care and partnering with us to accomplish the goal of improving quality of care access to appropriate care. As always, I welcome your questions and feedback, which can be submitted to [RA-DATreatment@pa.gov](mailto:RA-DATreatment@pa.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer S. Smith". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Jennifer Smith  
Acting Secretary  
Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs