

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION AND CONTROL**

Guidance for Completing the ASAM Screener for Youth and Young Adults

Background

The American Society of Addiction Medicine (*ASAM*) *Screener for Youth and Young Adults* is designed to screen youth (12-17) and young adults (18-20) for substance use disorder (SUD) risks and establish that Early Intervention services available under Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) are medically necessary to ameliorate conditions related to substance misuse.

Early Intervention (ASAM 0.5) services are appropriate for youth and young adults who do not meet Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) criteria for a SUD, but who would benefit from psychoeducation (using the *Healthy Youth* Early Intervention curriculum developed by Azusa Pacific University) and other services in accordance with the EPSDT benefit to correct or ameliorate a substance use condition. This includes services that sustain, support, improve or make more tolerable an existing substance misuse or a SUD condition. Early Intervention services are provided in outpatient settings and must be available as needed based on individual clinical need. A full assessment utilizing the ASAM criteria is not required for a DMC beneficiary to receive Early intervention services.

An *ASAM Screener for Youth and Young Adults* must be conducted within the appropriate timeframe to determine if Early Intervention services are medically necessary. The screener is an abbreviated ASAM tool that assesses the patient's risks in the following six ASAM dimensions:

- Dimension 1: Acute intoxication and/or withdrawal potential
- Dimension 2: Biomedical conditions and complications
- Dimension 3: Emotional, behavioral, and cognitive conditions and complications
- Dimension 4: Readiness to change
- Dimension 5: Relapse, continued use, or continued problem potential
- Dimension 6: Recovery/living environment

Guidance on completing each section of the *ASAM Screener for Youth and Young Adults* follows:

Youth/Young Adult Demographic Information

Complete the demographic section and write in patient's answers to questions 1-3.

EPSDT Eligibility Criteria for Early Intervention Services for Youth and Young Adults

Screen the patient for SUD risk factors using the prompt for each dimension, checking off relevant boxes based on the patient's answers. If the patient adds responses that do not fit into any of the boxes, write their answer in the "Other" section.

Past Year Substance Use

If the patient reports any past year substance use, complete the Past Year Substance Use table.

Narrative of Patient's Substance Use Risks

In this section, the SUD counselor or Licensed Practitioner of the Healing Arts (LPHA) who is completing the ASAM Screener should use their clinical judgment to provide narrative context for why Early Intervention services are medically necessary for the patient. The patient must be determined to have at least one or more risk factors to meet EPSDT criteria for Early Intervention

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Services. Consideration for Early Intervention Services must take into account the patient's responses in all six ASAM dimensions as recorded in the *EPSDT Eligibility Criteria for Early Intervention Services for Youth and Young Adults* section of the screener and potential interactions among dimensions, as these may increase or decrease an individual's SUD risks. For example, if the patient checked boxes in Dimensions 2 or 3 but did not report risks in any other dimensions, the counselor should probe for more information since those dimensions on their own are not specific to substance use. As well, if the patient checks boxes in Dimension 4 but not in other Dimensions, the counselor should probe for more information. Below are some examples of how probing for additional information from the patient may provide relevant information about the patient's risk for SUD:

- Example 1: Boxes are checked only in Dimension 2 and not in other Dimensions based on the patient's response. The counselor probes for more information and the patient elaborates that they suffer from chronic pain and rely on regular use of opioids to treat the symptoms which may place them at higher risk for opioid dependence or misuse. Based on this potential risk factor and all other information gathered in the screening, the counselor should use their clinical judgment to provide a justification for Early Intervention services as appropriate.
- Example 2: Boxes are checked only in Dimension 4 but not in other Dimensions based on the patient's responses. Since Dimension 4 is about the patient's readiness to change their substance use, the counselor should go back and ask some of the other questions again, correcting responses in other dimensions (e.g. Dimension 1) as appropriate. Based on all information gathered in the screening, the counselor should use their clinical judgment to provide a justification for Early Intervention services as appropriate.

Risk Information

If the *ASAM Screener for Youth and Young Adults* results indicate that the youth or young adult meets EPSDT criteria for Early Intervention services, they should be enrolled into Early Intervention Services (ASAM 0.5) to address the identified substance misuse condition.

If the patient needs a higher level of care such as outpatient, intensive outpatient, or residential services (e.g., ASAM 1.0, 2.1, 3.1, WM, etc.), a full ASAM Assessment is required to be enrolled in those services.