

Department of Health Services

Timothy W. Lutz
Director



County of Sacramento

Divisions

Administration
Behavioral Health
Primary Health
Public Health

Memorandum

Date: September 3, 2026

To: Sacramento County Contracted Drug Medi-Cal Substance Use Treatment Providers

From: Lori Miller, LCSW
Division Manager, Department of Health Services, Behavioral Health Services, Substance Use Prevention and Treatment

Subject: ASAM 4th Edition Announcement

Sacramento County is sharing a very early, high-level update regarding the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) plan to adopt the ASAM Criteria 4th Edition. All information included here is pre-decisional and may be updated once DHCS releases the final Behavioral Health Information Notice(s) (BHIN). DHCS is predicting that final guidance may be released around **January 1, 2027**, with implementation projected for **July 1, 2027**.

DHCS is working through what these updates will include, but the early themes point toward several system-wide shifts:

- **A move toward a chronic-care model**, emphasizing continuous assessment, dimensional criteria, and integrated mental and physical healthcare.
- **Major changes to levels of care**, including integrating withdrawal management and co-occurring capability across all levels, and eliminating certain standalone levels such as 3.2-Withdrawal Management (WM) and 3.3.
- **A stronger clinical presence across all residential levels**, with increased day-to-day structure and LPHA-level clinical oversight to support members with co-occurring needs.
- **Workforce implications**, including LPHA diagnostic requirements, strengthened co-occurring capability expectations, expanded

clinical/medical involvement, and updated minimum structured service hours across residential levels.

- **Withdrawal management and medication support incorporated into levels of care**, establishing unified expectations throughout the treatment continuum, potential additional requirements such as, Incidental Medical Services (IMS) to meet standards for 3.5 and 3.7 LOCs.

Sacramento County is sharing this information to help providers begin thinking about how these upcoming shifts may connect to current staffing models, training needs, and clinical structures. Providers may want to begin reflecting on how increased clinical involvement such as LPHA presence, mental health integration, or co-occurring support could align with their current program operations. Additional internal exploration may include considering how existing medical partnerships or consultation structures could support future expectations around medical management.

This information is pre-decisional and intended only to support early internal discussion. Sacramento County will continue reviewing updates as they become available and will share finalized guidance once DHCS releases official ASAM 4th Edition BHIN(s).

Collaborative discussions and support will occur in the established Provider Committees (Outpatient/Intensive Outpatient Treatment Committee, NTP Treatment Committee, Residential Treatment Committee, and Utilization Review Committee). Relevant information and inquiries will be forwarded to the ASAM 4th Edition Workgroup.

Please direct any questions to the email inbox: dhs-bhs-asam4-info@sacounty.gov. A formal Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document will be developed to document and track questions.