

How some treatment decisions or service options may have been made

The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) developed a widely used set of criteria for treating substance use issues, called the ASAM Criteria. Healthcare professionals use ASAM Criteria and a “multidimensional assessment” to look at different areas of a patient’s life and determine what services will best match his or her needs.

What’s unique about this approach is that it finds the least intensive treatment for each patient. Six major life areas (or “dimensions”) are used by healthcare providers and health plans during an assessment. These include:

Life Area 1: Past and current experiences with substance use and withdrawal.

Life Area 2: Physical health, medical problems, physical activity and nutrition.

Life Area 3: Thoughts, emotions and mental health issues.

Life Area 4: Identifies motivators, and examines readiness and interest in changing.

Life Area 5: Addresses concerns about continued substance use, mental health or a relapse.

Life Area 6: Reviews the living situation, people, places and things that are important to the patient.

Example Chart for Adult

Level of care	Life Area1	Life Area 2	Life Area 3	Life Area 4	Life Area 5	Life Area 6
Partial Hospitalization	Moderate risk of severe withdrawal	None or not distracting	Mild to moderate severity	Poor treatment engagement, needs near-daily structured program	High likelihood of relapse without near-daily monitoring and support	Unsupportive environment, cope with structure and support

Example Chart for Adolescent

Level of care	Life Area1	Life Area 2	Life Area 3	Life Area 4	Life Area 5	Life Area 6
Partial Hospitalization	Mild withdrawal, or at risk of withdrawal	None or not distracting	Low risk of harm, safe overnight	Requires near-daily structured program to promote progress	High risk of relapse, needs near-daily monitoring and support	Needs near-daily monitoring and support

The information provided in this document is intended to help you become an active participant in your own care, but should not be considered medical advice, nor is it comprehensive or definitive. This is not a clinical document and cannot be used to diagnose or identify care. For more information, consult a skilled, trained professional in substance use, mental health and/or other addictive disorders who uses the ASAM Criteria in their work. Excellus BlueCross BlueShield uses ASAM criteria for medical management of partial hospitalization services only.