

# **ASAM CONTINUUM™**

## **Initiative**

### **FAQs**

**Updated: 2/1/2024**



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## ASAM CONTINUUM™ - OVERVIEW

### Q1: What is ASAM CONTINUUM?

A1: The ASAM CONTINUUM is a validated ASAM Criteria level of care **assessment tool** that provides counselors, clinicians, and other treatment team members with a computer-guided, structured interview for assessing and caring for patients with addictive, substance-related and co-occurring conditions. **The decision engine is built from the ASAM Criteria** and uses research-quality questions (including tools such as the ASI, CIWA and CINA instruments) to generate a comprehensive patient report that details the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) substance use disorder (SUD) diagnoses, severity, and imminent risks as well as a recommended level of care determination.

For more information, visit [American Society of Addiction Medicine](#) and the [ASAM CONTINUUM](#) web pages.

### Q2: What is the difference between the ASAM Criteria and ASAM CONTINUUM?

A2: The ASAM Criteria is the most widely used and comprehensive text of guidelines for treating patients with addiction. **ASAM CONTINUUM is the operationalized software** which guides clinicians through an ASAM Criteria assessment and assists them with determining appropriate level of care placement. ASAM CONTINUUM and ASAM Criteria should be used in tandem—the text provides background and guidance for proper use of the software, and the software enables comprehensive, standardized evaluation. With ASAM CONTINUUM, clinicians can easily conduct a comprehensive biopsychosocial patient risk and needs assessment along all six ASAM Criteria Dimensions while determining the ASAM Criteria Levels of Care recommendation. **Clinicians utilizing the ASAM CONTINUUM must be trained in utilization of the ASAM Criteria 3rd edition.**

### Q3: Will the ASAM CONTINUUM be released in another language?

A3: The ASAM CONTINUUM is currently only available in English. The ASAM CONTINUUM platform has been programmed such that it can be readily translated into other languages.

### Q4: Can the ASAM CONTINUUM be used to assess adolescents?

A4: No, the ASAM CONTINUUM is not approved for adolescent use at this time. Providers should continue to utilize the ASAM Criteria.

### Q5: Who can conduct the ASAM CONTINUUM assessment?

A5: The ASAM CONTINUUM is a computer-guided, structured-interview tool that assists clinicians and qualified providers in conducting expert level biopsychosocial assessments.

### Q6: How long does it take to conduct the ASAM CONTINUUM assessment?

A6: After training and a learning curve of 15-20 cases, the ASAM CONTINUUM assessment was independently found to take the average clinician about 60 minutes to complete. The first few assessments may take longer, up to two hours, as users begin to familiarize themselves with the tool. ASAM provides streamlining tips and training, and other advanced skills for users as they become more comfortable with the tool.

### Q7: Can the ASAM CONTINUUM be used in criminal justice settings?

A7: The ASAM CONTINUUM is only validated for adult populations in the general public at this time. However, it can be adapted for specific use cases in criminal justice populations. ASAM has

developed a “Re-entry Interview Script Enhancement” (RISE) specifically for clients in jail or prison who are being prepared for release. If you are interested in having the RISE enabled in your program, please let ASAM and AHCCCS know.

**Q8: Does the ASAM CONTINUUM assessment replace the current ASAM assessment?**

A8: Yes, the ASAM CONTINUUM assessment is a comprehensive assessment for members with a SUD or co-occurring disorders, intended to replace current homegrown ASAM assessments used across the state. Organizations that want to ensure each item is documented for the Behavioral Health Audit are welcomed to utilize ASAM CONTINUUM comment sections/open text fields or create an addendum.

**Q9: Is the Global Assessment of Functioning (GAF) Scale included in the ASAM CONTINUUM?**

A9: Yes, the GAF Scale is used in ASAM CONTINUUM. Although the GAF Scale is no longer included in the DSM-5 textbook, the instrument has not lost any of its validity. The American Psychological Association (APA) dropped its multi-axial system of evaluation and functional measurement from its diagnostic criteria, but the ASAM Criteria system involves much more than simple diagnostic criteria - and therefore requires a detailed, quantitative, functional interviewer rating across a broad spectrum of patient activities. It remains an excellent tool for characterizing multi-dimensional levels of function for patients who may have SUD or co-occurring disorders. ASAM provides additional reference for clinicians that need guidance on the GAF Scale.

**Q10: What is CO-Triage® ?**

A10: ASAM CO-Triage® is a provisional referral tool for alcohol and substance problems. The CO-Triage® questions help clinicians identify broad categories of treatment needs along the six ASAM Criteria Dimensions. The decision logic in CO-Triage® calculates the provisionally recommended ASAM Level of Care (ASAM Levels 1, 2, 3, 4 and Opioid Treatment Services) to which a patient should proceed to receive an ASAM CONTINUUM Comprehensive Assessment – the definitive, research-validated, level of care placement recommendation.

With CO-Triage®, clinicians, as well as other health care service providers, can:

- Make provisional ASAM Level of Care treatment recommendations,
- Easily identify ASAM dimensional needs that require immediate attention including any withdrawal management, co-occurring, or bio-medical enhanced services,
- Increase the likelihood that patients are referred to the correct ASAM Level of Care, and
- Build from and easily synchronize with the research validated ASAM Criteria comprehensive assessment tool.

## FUNDING

**Q1: How will the ASAM CONTINUUM initiative be funded?**

A1: AHCCCS has implemented two separate funding mechanisms to fund integration of the ASAM CONTINUUM assessment:

- A Differential Adjusted Payment (DAP) was made available for the EHR integration costs; and
- Increased assessment reimbursement with the U9 modifier, for an additional reimbursement of \$28.30 to cover the cost of the ASAM CONTINUUM subscription.

**Q2: Where can I find out more information about the Differential Adjusted Payment (DAP)?**

A2: To see the current DAP Notices, please visit the [DAP web page](#) under AHCCCS Policy Notices page under Rates & Supplemental Payment for more information.

**Q3: What billing codes are used with the U9 modifier to receive the additional reimbursement?**

A3: AHCCCS is providing an additional reimbursement amount of \$28.30 for each ASAM CONTINUUM assessment completed utilizing the U9 modifier with the following procedure codes: H0001, H0031, 90791, and 90792. For FFS claims, U9 modifiers will be verified through the Division of Fee for Service Management. Currently, the U9 modifier is not available for FQHC provider types.

## PROVIDER REQUIREMENTS

### Q1: Which AHCCCS providers are required to conduct the ASAM CONTINUUM?

A1: Beginning October 1, 2024, organizations who are providing substance use disorder or co-occurring mental health services to >50% of their adult members served, must utilize the ASAM CONTINUUM for all SUD assessments.

By October 1, 2025, AHCCCS providers who provide substance use disorder and/or co-occurring services are required to utilize the ASAM CONTINUUM for adults; this includes SUD assessments for members who have co-occurring mental health and SUD.

### Q2: Is there an established deadline by which providers must implement ASAM CONTINUUM assessment?

A2: By October 1, 2025, all assessments for substance use disorder and co-occurring disorders must be completed with the ASAM CONTINUUM.

### Q3: What are the provider requirements for the ASAM Criteria?

A3: All providers treating substance use disorders and/or co-occurring mental health disorders are required to utilize ASAM Criteria. The ASAM CONTINUUM assessment should be utilized for members 18 years of age or older.

### Q4: Is the ASAM CONTINUUM required of Fee-for-Service (FFS) Providers?

A4: The ASAM CONTINUUM is not required to be used for FFS members including American Indian Health Plan (AIHP), Tribal Regional Behavioral Health Authorities (TRBHA) & Tribal Arizona Long Term Care System (ALTCS) members. Regardless of whether the ASAM CONTINUUM is used for FFS, coordination with AIHP (Division of Fee for Service Management), TRBHA, and Tribal ALTCS should take place.

## **ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD (EHR) INTEGRATION**

**Q1: What is the process for integrating the ASAM CONTINUUM into the provider's EHR?**

A1: Providers should start the process by speaking with their own EHR vendor about integrating the ASAM CONTINUUM into their system. Providers and/or vendors can reach out to ASAM CONTINUUM contact Bill Liu at [bliu@asam.org](mailto:bliu@asam.org) for technical assistance related to EHR integration.

**Q2: What is the level of integration for the ASAM CONTINUUM?**

A2: On August 18, 2022, after discussion of the various options and the clinical data needs of the programs, the Arizona ASAM CONTINUUM Steering Committee consensus decision is to implement a "level 2 integration," which goes beyond the minimum level of integration, but is less than the original Council of Human Service Providers recommendation of full integration.

**Q3: Is integration required if a provider already has the forms built into their own EHR System?**

A3: No, EHR level 2 integration is not required unless providers would like to qualify for the differential adjusted payment (DAP) referenced in Funding FAQ #1.

## TRAINING

### Q1: What is the training requirement to utilize the ASAM CONTINUUM?

A1: The ASAM CONTINUUM Arizona On-Demand Workshop offers an 8-hour, on-demand workshop designed to help counselors, social workers, administrators, and other clinical staff learn how to navigate and appropriately use the ASAM CONTINUUM to generate a level of care placement for individuals with alcohol and substance use problems. The workshop content is based on information found in The ASAM Criteria and incorporates an opportunity for participants to practice applying the information through interactive and case-based activities. ASAM Criteria 3rd Edition Training is required for all providers and staff providing SUD assessments.

Please note that there is a \$50 administration fee, per user, to register for this course.

ASAM CONTINUUM Registration Instructions:

1. To create an account, follow this link: <https://www.asam.org/login>
2. To register for the ASAM CONTINUUM Course, please follow this link: <https://elearning.asam.org/products/asam-continuum-course-arizona-on-demand>

### Q2: When is the best time to complete the training?

A2: It is recommended that training be completed four to six weeks prior to the implementation of the ASAM CONTINUUM.



## CONFIDENTIALITY

**Q1: Is the consent form required to initiate the ASAM CONTINUUM assessment?**

**A1:** 42 CFR Part 2 (Confidentiality of Substance Use Disorder Records) is more restrictive than HIPAA. A member must give authorization for a Part 2 Provider to bill their insurance by signing a consent. A member must give a Part 2 Provider permission to share their SUD records with any other person or entity including their other treating providers. And any entity that receives Part 2 records may not re-disclose them without a member's consent. Providers may not load the information into the automated tool where anyone else can see it without the member's consent.

## ASAM CONTINUUM - SUBSCRIPTION

### Q1: Do I have to purchase a subscription?

A1: Yes, the ASAM CONTINUUM is a subscription-based product. ASAM has agreed to provide discounted subscription rates for all AHCCCS providers. Subscriptions are sold per user and renewed annually.

### Q2: Is there funding available to pay for the ASAM CONTINUUM subscription?

A2: AHCCCS is providing an additional reimbursement amount of \$28.30 for each ASAM CONTINUUM assessment utilizing the U9 modifier with the following procedure codes: H0001, H0031, 90791, and 90792. Currently the U9 modifier is not available to FQHC provider types.

### Q3: How do I purchase an ASAM CONTINUUM subscription?

A3: For providers who have integrated the ASAM CONTINUUM into their EHR, they must work with their EHR vendor to purchase subscriptions.

For providers utilizing the AZ WITS platform, please see the current AZ WITS Order Form on the AHCCCS ASAM webpage to purchase.

### Q4: Do I need to purchase a subscription if I am only reviewing and signing the ASAM CONTINUUM reports?

A4: No, only staff members who are completing the ASAM CONTINUUM assessment or need to view the actual ASAM CONTINUUM questions and answers need to purchase subscriptions. Provider agency staff that only need to view the ASAM CONTINUUM Summary or Narrative reports do not need to purchase the subscription.

### Q5: Is the ASAM CONTINUUM subscription transferable?

A5: Yes, the ASAM CONTINUUM subscriptions can be transferred within the provider agency. The staff administrators will be trained to transfer those subscriptions if a staff leaves or no longer needs access to the ASAM CONTINUUM.

### Q6: How many subscriptions do I need to purchase for my organization?

A6: Each organization will need to evaluate their organization's needs and structure to identify the appropriate amount of subscriptions to purchase. It is recommended that organizations review their intake processes to ensure that members are directed to the appropriate staff with the ASAM CONTINUUM subscription.

## AZ WITS - OVERVIEW

### Q1: What is AZ WITS?

A1: For providers who do not have access to the ASAM CONTINUUM through their EHR, AZ WITS (Web Infrastructure for Treatment Systems) is a web-based application to conduct the ASAM CONTINUUM assessment. AZ WITS satisfies AHCCCS requirements for conducting ASAM CONTINUUM assessments.

### Q2: If my agency has ASAM CONTINUUM integrated in the EHR, would I still need to use AZ WITS?

A2: No, AZ WITS is a separate online portal to gain access to ASAM CONTINUUM.

### Q3: What is the provider fee to use AZ WITS?

A3: The provider does not have to pay any fee to access the ASAM CONTINUUM through AZ WITS, as AHCCCS is paying for the AZ WITS platform. The provider is still required to pay for the ASAM CONTINUUM subscription fee as outlined in the subscription FAQs section.

### Q4: What is the benefit to using the AZ WITS platform?

A4: AZ WITS facilitates cooperation and collaboration among providers by enabling the sharing of client services information via the web and allows AHCCCS to access data as well as manage relationships with providers and community organizations.

### Q5: Who will I contact if I have technical issues with my AZ WITS platform?

A5: Each provider agency will have a staff administrator who will be responsible for setting up staff accounts/subscriptions and who will be able to reset passwords and troubleshoot issues. The provider agency staff administrator will be able to set up as many AZ WITS accounts as needed to support access to the agency's clients. The staff administrator will be able to assign appropriate security roles for staff to launch the assessment associated with the subscriptions purchased. Please see the Application Help FAQ section for more information.

### Q6: How do I integrate AZ WITS into my EHR?

A6: The AZ WITS system does not integrate with other EHR systems. AZ WITS is a web-based application. Please see the General FAQ section for more information on integrating ASAM CONTINUUM into your EHR.

### Q7: What is the benefit of using the AZ WITS platform?

A7: There are many benefits to utilizing the AZ WITS platform for access to the ASAM CONTINUUM, including using the ASAM Criteria™ to fidelity, improved patient outcomes, improved patient placement level of care, and no EHR integration cost or monthly maintenance fees.

### Q8: Can AZ WITS be used for non-AHCCCS members?

A8: Yes, AZ WITS can be used with non-AHCCCS members or members that have not been given an AHCCCS ID yet. For the member ID, enter "S00000000." Once a member receives an actual AHCCCS ID, you will need to create a new client account as ID numbers cannot be changed in AZ WITS.

### Q9: Must a consent be completed to give access to the Managed Care Organization (MCO) to review the completed assessment?

A9: The consent is required due to HIPAA Privacy and 42 CFR Part II regulations. The MCOs and the provider are in different AZ WITS agency environments. The provider may have members with

different MCOs. The consent ensures that the provider is giving access to the MCOs for the member associated with that MCO. The AZ WITS consent form is the mechanism to make the member information available to the MCO viewing queue.

**Q10: Why does the AZ WITS platform have required fields highlighted in yellow but the ASAM CONTINUUM assessment does not?**

A10: The product is made up of two systems - the first is the AZ WITS portion (loading member details, consent, etc.), the second is the ASAM CONTINUUM software. The bright yellow and white are specific to the AZ WITS portion. Once a member is loaded then the provider can "launch" the assessment. The fields needed for the assessment scoring have a pale-yellow background.

**Q11: Does AZ WITS have data import/export capability?**

A11: The completed assessment can be downloaded and uploaded into an EHR with the ability to accept uploaded PDF files. AZ WITS also allows for data to be exported but there is no interface for providers to upload data to the AZ WITS platform at this time.

**Q12: Does AZ WITS include CO-Triage®?**

A12: The AZ WITS platform has the option to include the ASAM CO-Triage® for an additional subscription add-on fee. FEI Systems has included the add-on subscription cost in the order form.

**Q13: Where can I find training materials on how to use AZ WITS?**

A13: Please see the Arizona ASAM CONTINUUM website for the link to AZ WITS training materials.

## AZ WITS - APPLICATION HELP

**Q1: What if I do not know the full name of the member when accessing a profile?**

A1: Use the first couple of letters of the name then use "\*" - example "rob\*" for Robert.

**Q2: What web browser works with AZ WITS?**

A2: All browsers except Safari and Internet Explorer (IE) web browsers are recommended. Microsoft is phasing out Internet Explorer, officially ending support on August 17, 2021. Not only is there a security risk when using outdated software, but as of August 2021, Internet Explorer will no longer work optimally and may result in a degraded experience or will be unable to connect to services.

**Q3: What if I completed the ASAM CONTINUUM assessment on an adolescent and the level of care recommended is not appropriate?**

A3: If the recommended level of care is not appropriate, then select the appropriate level of care with the Actual Level of Care, select the Clinical Override, and add a note in the Comments section.

**Q4: What if I cannot access the ASAM CONTINUUM assessment after I have created the client's profile?**

A4: Make sure that pop-up blocker is turned off and select "always allow" and make sure you have a completed consent with the appropriate health plan selected.

**Q5: What if I do not have the ability to check the member's blood pressure and heart rate?**

A5: The blood pressure and heart questions are no longer required and have been replaced with required questions used to determine if you were able to assess blood pressure and/or heart rate. The blood pressure and heart rate questions have been revised to not be required so they do not require the provider to input "normal" rates. If you are unable to check one or both and answer 'no,' then there is no requirement to enter actual values.

**Q6: What if there are multiple Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) licenses per location?**

A6: When the account is set up, multiple locations can be created. A dropdown selection of the name of the facility will be available per location that will match what is stated, per ADHS location. Please let us know how you would like your account to be set up by emailing [ASAM@azahcccs.gov](mailto:ASAM@azahcccs.gov) prior to submitting your order form.

**Q7: Can you change the member's AHCCCS ID if you enter it incorrectly?**

A7: No, once a member's AHCCCS ID has been created it cannot be edited. If a duplicated AHCCCS ID has been entered AZ WITS, the system will provide a message – "Similar Clients already exist in the System and are listed below. Do you wish to continue inserting this client record? Click "Override and Add" to continue to add the member.

**Q8: Can a member's address be updated in AZ WITS?**

A8: Yes, a member's demographic data can be updated at any given time.

**Q9: Can more than one chart be opened at any given time in AZ WITS?**

A9: No, only one member's chart can be open at one given time.