ASAM Releases Public Policy Statement on Government Strategies to Foster Ethical Addiction Treatment

Rockville, MD – To facilitate remission, support long-term recovery, and save more lives of those affected by addiction, the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) today released a new Public Policy Statement on Government Strategies to Foster Ethical Addiction Treatment, with several recommendations for policymakers at all levels in America.

In its statement, ASAM outlines key steps that policymakers should take to address powerful economic, political, social, and other drivers that can undermine effective addiction treatment and perpetuate subquality treatment approaches, coercive strategies causing harm, fraudulent and abusive business practices, and excessive and unfair profit-seeking related to addiction treatment. Recognizing shortfalls in current approaches, ASAM calls for government adoption of long-term strategies that address persistent unethical practices and increase access to high quality addiction treatment services.

“As physicians we are taught to protect the individual patient-clinician relationship, obtain informed consent, and address social determinants of health – but unfortunately, we operate in an environment that can perpetuate unethical and harmful practices concerning one of America’s most vulnerable patient populations,” said Brian Hurley, MD, MBA, president of the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM). “Today, we’re calling on policymakers to implement long-term strategies that promote high quality, evidence-based, and ethical addiction treatment.”

ASAM’s recommendations to government leaders include:

- Developing and regularly updating national model standards for state licensure of addiction treatment programs that meet the nationally recognized program standards in the most current edition of The ASAM Criteria;
- Providing resources to help establish a core set of performance measures in addiction treatment, for the purpose of national endorsement and use;
- Funding research on the role and efficacy of coercive strategies in addiction treatment that consist of social controls aimed at causing a person to take a prescribed action using force or threats, which includes patient perceptions and experiences and the impact of such social controls on their motivation, interest, and intent to pursue and engage in addiction treatment;
• Establishing confidential mechanisms to investigate reports of unethical practices involving addiction care;
• Ensuring fair and truthful advertising for addiction treatment programs on the internet, encouraging internet search engines to work with addiction treatment stakeholders to ensure that certification fee scales for participation in internet advertising are not unfairly prohibitive, and ensuring certifiers have well-established accreditation and certification standards; and
• Facilitating and incentivizing addiction clinicians and treatment programs to accept public and commercial insurance.

Expanding access to evidence-based treatment is critical at a time when addiction has become one of the country’s most challenging public health crises. Almost one in five individuals had a substance use disorder in 2022, and nearly one in three Americans will meet criteria for alcohol use disorder during their lifetimes. As billions of dollars flow into American communities from opioid litigation settlements and from state, federal, and local governments, it is essential to align policies with ethical practices to ensure the money is being spent wisely and effectively.

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About the American Society of Addiction Medicine
The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), founded in 1954, is a professional medical society representing over 7,000 physicians, clinicians, and associated professionals in the field of addiction medicine. ASAM is dedicated to increasing access and improving the quality of addiction treatment, educating physicians and the public, supporting research and prevention and promoting the appropriate role of physicians in the care of patients with addiction. For more information, visit www.ASAM.org.