



ASAM American Society of
Addiction Medicine

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American Society of Addiction Medicine Releases New Definition of Addiction to Advance Greater Understanding of the Complex, Chronic Disease

Incomplete Understanding of Addiction has Prevented an Adequate Response from the Medical Community, the Criminal Justice System and Policymakers in Addressing Prevention, Treatment, Remission, and Recovery and Reducing Overdose Deaths

Rockville, MD – The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) – the nation’s largest organization representing medical professionals who specialize in addiction prevention and treatment – has updated the society’s [definition of addiction](#) to explain more fully the complexity of this chronic disease with the intent of driving a bold and comprehensive national response that creates a future when addiction prevention, treatment, remission and recovery are accessible to all, and profoundly improve the health of all people. The release of the updated definition of addiction coincides with [National Addiction Treatment Week](#), which is recognized from October 21–27, 2019.

In [commentary published in Medium](#) today, the president and vice president of ASAM, Drs. Paul Earley and Yngvild Olsen respectively, note the updated definition “underscores the complex interplay of unique biological, psychological, and environmental conditions that have a role in any one individual’s addiction.” Moreover, the two assert that a better understanding of addiction “... may lead us to bolder policy interventions that save and improve more lives. Ultimately, public perception and public policy must reflect this nuanced understanding if our nation is to recover.”

The updated definition reads:

Addiction is a treatable, chronic medical disease involving complex interactions among brain circuits, genetics, the environment, and an individual’s life experiences. People with addiction

use substances or engage in behaviors that become compulsive and often continue despite harmful consequences.

Prevention efforts and treatment approaches for addiction are generally as successful as those for other chronic diseases.

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About ASAM

The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), founded in 1954, is a professional medical society representing over 6,000 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.