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Media Contact:
Rebecca Reid
410-212-3843
rreid@schmidtpa.com

ASAM Issues Public Policy Statement on Advancing Racial Justice in Health Care Through Addiction Medicine

Nation's leading medical society of addiction specialist physicians and other clinicians and associated professionals in the field of addiction medicine issues second in series of statements reflecting ASAM's effort to recognize, understand, and counteract systemic racism

Rockville, MD – Today the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) announced the release of its [Public Policy Statement on Advancing Racial Justice in Health Care in Addiction Medicine](#), the second in a three-part series of policy statements that seeks to recognize, understand, and counteract the adverse effects of systemic racism on full-spectrum addiction care in the United States, including prevention, early intervention, harm reduction, diagnosis, treatment, and recovery.

The [first statement](#) in the series, released in February 2021, focused on actions addiction medicine professionals should take to tackle systemic causes of health disparities, recognizing that corrective responses must consist of conscious efforts to overcome racial biases and unjust systems.

The newly issued statement focuses on specific actions that healthcare professionals, healthcare systems, institutions, organizations, professional medical entities, researchers, and health professional educators can take to help advance addiction medicine and its role in addressing health disparities for people of color.

“Throughout this nation’s history, punitive responses have failed people of color who use substances,” said Stephen M. Taylor, MD, MPH, DFAPA, DFASAM, who serves on ASAM’s Board of Directors and is co-chair of the organization’s Racial Justice writing committee. “In this new policy statement, we outline the urgent need for policy reforms that prioritize full-spectrum addiction care over punishment, reduction of stigma against all people who use substances, and enhancement of the health and well-being of all people who have the disease of addiction.”

Highlighting the longstanding role of the criminal legal system and child welfare in inappropriately assuming responsibility for, or otherwise interfering upon, clinical decisions for people with substance use disorder, with the most adverse consequences disproportionately

affecting people of color, the statement stresses the need for clinicians and patients to take responsibility for shared decision making with respect to full-spectrum addiction care.

The policy statement contains 18 specific recommendations designed to reduce criminal legal system and child welfare system influence on addiction care, as well as to guide healthcare professionals, healthcare systems, institutions, professional medical entities, researchers, and educators in antiracism efforts.

To view the policy statement, click [here](#).

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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.