

# LAWYERS Assistance

By J.E. (Buddy) Stockwell

## JLAP'S ASSESSMENT/TREATMENT CRITERIA

The most widely used and comprehensive set of guidelines for treating patients with addiction disorders is the ASAM Criteria. The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) was founded in 1954. Its membership includes more than 3,600 professionals practicing medicine within the specialized field of addiction. Within ASAM criteria is a special category—Safety Sensitive Workers (SSW).

The SSW population specifically includes lawyers, doctors, nurses and airline pilots—people who hold the public's trust and are required in the performance of their duties to utilize a complex body of knowledge and training while making real-time decisions wherein mistakes can severely damage the public.

ASAM criteria, and other professionals' programming guidelines, are utilized by Louisiana JLAP on a case-by-case basis to provide specialized clinical assistance purposefully designed both to help the person experiencing difficulty and to help protect the profession and the public.

Per ASAM SSW criteria:

► SSWs with untreated, or insufficiently treated, substance use disorders place the public at undue risk and therefore should not practice until safely in remission via professionals' program guidelines;

► Assessment, treatment and recovery efforts must meet ASAM SSW and professionals' program guidelines to produce reliable long-term recovery rates that protect the public and provide confidence that the person is fit to practice; and

► ASAM SSW criteria seek to greatly reduce the risk of relapse within SSW professionals.

According to ASAM, assisting SSWs often includes objective, in-depth clinical assessments facilitated by programs such as JLAP to reliably diagnose substance use disorders and to identify any other mental health concerns present. JLAP-approved treatment facilities have expertise in diagnosing and treating SSWs. When both the

treatment team and the patient understand and meet ASAM SSW criteria, the odds of post-treatment relapse are *dramatically* reduced. Avoiding relapse is the central goal of professionals' programs and SSW-level treatment. Per ASAM:

With Safety Sensitive Workers, there is not the luxury for the treating clinician to stand back and sagely watch while a series of lapses and relapses helps the patient internalize full acceptance of his or her addiction. For many Safety Sensitive Workers, there can be little or no tolerance for relapse. This intolerance comes from two places: 1) the potential for real public harm; and 2) the reprisal from licensing agencies, legal action, professional organizations, or command structures.

Louisiana JLAP's full-service, "broad brush" program provides comprehensive mental health professionals' programming to Louisiana's legal profession. By following appropriate ASAM SSW criteria and professionals' programming guidelines, JLAP's participants achieve an 85-90 percent relapse-free success rate at the completion of JLAP's program. As such, Louisiana's JLAP is one of the most effective professionals' programs in existence today and has been recognized as a top-tier program nationally.

JLAP's remarkable effectiveness rests in large measure upon its careful utilization of ASAM SSW and professionals' programming guidelines in three main stages of assistance for substance use disorders: 1) facilitation of a JLAP-approved evaluation or assessment to reliably identify an individual's mental health needs; 2) referral to a JLAP-approved professionals' track treatment facility best suited to address the specific issues identified in the assessment; and 3) formal post-treatment recovery monitoring services provided directly by JLAP.

JLAP recovery monitoring post-treatment typically includes requirements for random

drug screens to facilitate total abstinence from alcohol and drugs, attendance of support group meetings, and participating in other clinical follow-up recommendations or therapy as the individual may need to support quality, long-term remission without relapse. On average, at any given time, JLAP has more than 100 people participating in recovery monitoring.

It is paramount to keep in mind that alcoholism and addiction are very serious, chronic diseases that are often fatal if not successfully treated. While the ASAM SSW criteria and professionals' programming guidelines are no doubt demanding and designed to help save a SSW professional's career, the most important outcome is that these professionals' lives are literally being saved.

The effectiveness of full-service professionals' programs like JLAP is catching experts' eyes. In 2013, Robert L. DuPont, MD, of the Institute for Behavior and Health, Inc. hosted a symposium in Washington, D.C., on the "New Paradigm for Recovery,"<sup>1</sup> a new strategy to dramatically reduce relapse in the general population.

If you or someone you know has an alcohol or drug problem, call JLAP at (985)778-0571 or go online at: [www.louisianajlap.com](http://www.louisianajlap.com). Your call is confidential and you do not have to give your name.

### FOOTNOTE

1. "The New Paradigm for Recovery: Making Recovery—and Not Relapse—the Expected Outcome of Addiction Treatment," A Report of the John P. McGovern Symposium hosted by the Institute for Behavior and Health, Inc., Nov. 18, 2013, Washington, D.C.

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