

# SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER NEED LEVEL AND LEVEL OF TREATMENT RECEIVED: A BRIEF



Washington State Department of  
**CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES**

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Office of Innovation, Alignment, and Accountability

Approved for distribution by Catherine M. Wilson, Evaluation & Research Administrator



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## Substance Use Disorder Need Level and Level of Treatment Received

### Abstract

There is a high prevalence of substance use disorder among Juvenile Rehabilitation clients; however, it is unclear as to whether these clients are receiving the appropriate level of treatment. This study shows that 33.8% of clients with an SUD need are receiving treatment at a level that does not correctly match their SUD need level. Furthermore, the data show that 88% of clients with an SUD need are at level I or level II; however, only 70% of clients receive either level I or level II treatment, and only 2.5% of clients have a SUD need level of 0.5; however, 16% of clients receive treatment at this level.

### Background

Multiple studies have shown the high prevalence of substance use disorder (SUD) treatment needs of clients in Juvenile Rehabilitation. SUD treatment numbers have been rising among clients in JR who indicate SUD treatment need; however, it is unclear if clients are receiving the level of treatment that matches their level of need. Juvenile Rehabilitation staff have expressed a need for information on whether clients are receiving the correct treatment level to match their needs.

This research brief examines whether clients who indicated a substance use disorder treatment need are receiving substance use disorder treatment at the equivalent need level. Furthermore, which treatment need level is most frequently unmet?

### Methods

When a client enters a JR facility, they receive the IDEA (Integrated Developmental Evaluation and Assessment) within 14 days. The IDEA consists of multiple modules, one of which is an SUD module. If a client scores a moderate or high on the SUD module, they are then referred for further SUD assessment, specifically the Adolescent Substance Use Assessment (ASUA). After completing the ASUA, the client is assigned an American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) SUD need level, which determines the level of treatment the client should receive. The ASAM level from the ASUA was compared to the SUD treatment level received (ASAM treatment level assigned to a specific SUD treatment) to determine the frequency at which incorrect treatment levels are being provided to clients. Only clients with a sentence of 90 days or greater were included in this analysis to ensure JR staff had sufficient time to assess the client and provide some level of treatment.

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This study population included clients who were released from a residential facility in JR between January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, and December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024, who had served at least a 90-day sentence to ensure JR staff had sufficient time to assess the client and provide some level of treatment. Out of the initial 471 clients released during this time frame, with a 90-day or greater sentence, 230 clients were excluded due to missing an ASUA and, therefore, were unable to determine SUD need level, whether treatment was provided or not. Of those 230 clients missing an ASUA, 133 had either a moderate or high SUD need indicated from the IDEA. With the exclusion of those 230 clients, a final sample size of 241 clients was used for this research brief.

**Results**

Table 1 shows the count of SUD Need Level from the ASUA per client (with an ASUA) released between January 1<sup>st</sup> 2023 and December 31<sup>st</sup> 2024. The majority of clients have an SUD need level of I (outpatient therapy) or II (intensive outpatient therapy). A need level of ‘N/A’ indicates that a client’s initial assessment (the IDEA) showed a pattern of alcohol or drug use; however, when assessed further with the ASUA, the drug use was below the minimal ASAM level of 0.5 (education). Only 7.9 percent of clients were assessed at a level III (intensive inpatient therapy).

**Table 1: Count of SUD Need Level (Releases 1/1/23 - 12/31/24)**

<b>SUD Need Level</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
N/A	4	1.7%
0.5	6	2.5%
I	65	27.0%
II	147	61.0%
III	19	7.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Data Source: DCYF Juvenile Rehabilitation (1/1/23 - 12/31/24). Automated Client Tracking (ACT).

Table 2 breaks down SUD Need Level by a client's SUD Score on the IDEA, which can be either low, moderate, or high. Typically, a score of Moderate or High indicates to JR SUD staff that the client should be further assessed with the ASUA. However, a client may still receive an ASUA with a ‘low’ IDEA score based on multiple other factors, such as further discussions with staff or later admissions to drug/alcohol use by the client. The majority of clients in each category (low, moderate, high) have an SUD Need Level of I or II.

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**Table 2: SUD Need Level by SUD IDEA Score (Low, Mod, High) (Releases 1/1/23 - 12/31/24)**

SUD Need Level	Low		Mod		High		Missing IDEA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
N/A	1	3.4%	3	4.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
0.5	1	3.4%	2	3.3%	2	1.5%	1	5.9%
I	4	13.8%	16	26.2%	40	29.9%	5	29.4%
II	22	75.9%	36	59.0%	79	59.0%	10	58.8%
III	1	3.4%	4	6.6%	13	9.7%	1	5.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Data Source: DCYF Juvenile Rehabilitation (1/1/23 - 12/31/24). Automated Client Tracking (ACT).

Table 3 shows the count of SUD treatment types for each client with an ASUA. Clients can typically receive more than one SUD treatment type; however, for this study, the treatment matching the client's level was counted, or if no match, the highest level of treatment received was used. The majority of clients received Level I or Level II treatment, followed by Level 0.5. It is important to note that treatment level III (intensive inpatient) is no longer offered at either Echo Glen CC (since approximately late 2020) or Green Hill School (since approximately late 2017); therefore, some of the counts for this treatment level are data errors.

**Table 3: Count\* of SUD Treatment Type (Releases 1/1/23 - 12/31/24)**

SUD Treatment Type	N	%
No Treatment	22	9.1%
Opioid Prevention/Education (ASAM Level 0.5)	25	10.4%
Education/Early Intervention (ASAM Level 0.5)	14	5.8%
Brief Interventions (ASAM Level 1)	5	2.1%
Outpatient Treatment (ASAM Level 1)	52	21.6%
Intensive Outpatient Treatment (ASAM Level 2)	116	48.1%
Intensive Inpatient Treatment (ASAM Level 3)**	7	2.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Data Source: DCYF Juvenile Rehabilitation (1/1/23 - 12/31/24). Automated Client Tracking (ACT).

\*Clients can have multiple treatments however, only the highest level of treatment per client is counted

\*\*Intensive Inpatient Treatment is not currently offered at any location within JR and counts are likely due to data errors

Table 4 shows the count of each SUD treatment broken down by SUD need level per client. The highlighted portion of the table shows where the treatment level matches the need level. The majority of clients within each need level received the appropriate treatment level, excluding need level III due to the unavailability of this treatment level.

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**Table 4: SUD Treatment Type by SUD Need Level Determined by the ASUA\* (Releases 1/1/23 - 12/31/24)**

SUD Treatment Type	N/A		0.5		I		II		III	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
No Treatment	1	25.0%	1	16.7%	4	6.2%	15	10.2%	1	5.3%
Opioid Prevention/Education (ASAM Level 0.5)	2	50.0%	3	50.0%	8	12.3%	10	6.8%	2	10.5%
Education/Early Intervention (ASAM Level 0.5)	0	0.0%	1	16.7%	8	12.3%	4	2.7%	1	5.3%
Brief Interventions (ASAM Level 1)	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	1.5%	4	2.7%	4	21.1%
Outpatient Treatment (ASAM Level 1)	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	41	63.1%	7	4.8%	0	0.0%
Intensive Outpatient Treatment (ASAM Level 2)	1	25.0%	1	16.7%	3	4.6%	107	72.8%	4	21.1%
Intensive Inpatient Treatment (ASAM Level 3)**	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	7	36.8%
Relapse Prevention/Aftercare	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Data Source: DCYF Juvenile Rehabilitation (1/1/23 - 12/31/24). Automated Client Tracking (ACT).

\*SUD Need Levels II.1 and II.5 were combined into II, and levels III.1, III.5, III.7 into III to match treatment ASAM levels

\*\*Intensive Inpatient Treatment is not currently offered at any location within JR and counts are likely due to data errors

Table 5 gives a further breakdown of the percentage of clients receiving an SUD treatment matching their SUD need level. The majority of each need level, aside from need level III, are receiving a SUD treatment at the correct level. Overall, of those clients who had an ASUA and received treatment, 66.2% received treatment that matched their need level, whereas 33.8% of clients received a treatment level different than their SUD need level.

**Table 5: Count of Whether SUD Treatment (TX) Level Matched SUD Need Level (Releases 1/1/23 - 12/31/24)**

TX Match Need	0.5		I		II		III*		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	4	66.7%	42	64.6%	107	72.8%	4	21.1%	157	66.2%
No	2	33.3%	23	35.4%	40	27.2%	15	78.9%	80	33.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>237**</b>	<b>100%</b>

Data Source: DCYF Juvenile Rehabilitation (1/1/23 - 12/31/24). Automated Client Tracking (ACT).

\*Intensive Inpatient Treatment (ASAM 3) was offered at Echo Glen until late 2020 and Green Hill School until 2017, these number reflect treatment given in this timeframe

\*\*excludes those with ASAM SUD Need Level (from ASUA) of N/A as there is no treatment matching this level

### Penetration and Utilization of SUD Services

Of the 328 clients who scored a moderate or high on the SUD IDEA section, making them eligible for further SUD assessment (ASUA) and treatment, 241 clients received some level of treatment. Therefore, the penetration rate of SUD treatment among eligible clients who were released between January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023 and December 31<sup>st</sup> 2024, is 73.5%.

Of the 237 clients who were assessed using the ASUA as having an SUD Need Level of either 0.5, I, II, or III, only 157 of the clients received treatment at a matching level. Therefore, the utilization of SUD Treatment among JR clients with an ASUA who were released between January 1<sup>st</sup> 2023 and December 31<sup>st</sup> 2024 is 66.2%.

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## Limitations

Not every client who shows an SUD need on the IDEA receives an ASUA – this could be due to JR staff, sentence length, use of a community-based assessment, or the client’s refusal to participate. Intensive Inpatient (treatment level III) is not offered (since late 2020 at Echo Glen, and since 2017 at GHS) at either institution, and there are different treatment approaches across institutions/CFs. Clients may receive SUD treatment in the community while housed in a JR Community Facility, for which records are not kept within ACT, and therefore not included in this analysis.

## Summary and Recommendations

In summary, the data show that 88% of clients with an SUD need are at a level I or level II, however, only 70% of clients receive either level I or level II treatment. Furthermore, only 2.5% of clients have a SUD need level of 0.5; however, 16% of clients are receiving treatment at this level. The data also shows that 33.8% of clients with an SUD need are receiving treatment at a level that does not correctly match their SUD need level.

### Recommendation 1

JR SUD staff should prioritize fully assessing youth who present an SUD need based on a moderate or high SUD score on the IDEA assessment. In this sample alone, 57.8% of youth (133 clients of those missing an ASUA (n=230) in this sample) had a moderate or high SUD score on the IDEA, however, they did not have an ASUA. JR SUD staff can accomplish this by exploring incentive options for clients to complete the ASUA to reduce the number of client refusals, and by making sure that those willing to complete the ASUA do so promptly to provide sufficient time for treatment to occur.

### Recommendation 2

JR leadership should explore options that would allow for missing treatment needs to be met and correct treatment levels to be provided to clients. This can be accomplished by establishing a dedicated facility or living unit that would solely address SUD treatment needs. One option for males would be to dedicate some of the Harbor Heights facility to SUD treatment. Currently, JR does not offer any level III SUD treatment (intensive inpatient therapy). Harbor Heights, or another location dedicated to SUD treatment, would help ensure youth who need it are receiving the appropriate treatment, either level II (intensive outpatient) or level III treatment (intensive inpatient). A dedicated location would ensure more youth in JR residential care are able to receive SUD treatment.

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