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Title

Utilizing ASAM CONTINUUM® at Rural FQHC to Identify Gaps in Addiction Services

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Introduction

- **20 million** people in the USA struggled with a substance use disorder (SUD) in 2020.
- SUD affects both **rural** and urban areas, but rural areas have **fewer treatment resources**.
- ASAM CONTINUUM® is an intake assessment tool created by the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) that helps evaluate SUD and recommend the appropriate **level of care** (Figure 1).
- El Dorado Community Health Center has a **Level 1** SUD treatment clinic in rural Northern California that implemented ASAM CONTINUUM®.

Objective

To use **ASAM CONTINUUM®** intake assessment data to demonstrate the **need for care higher than Level 1** for **patients** presenting for **SUD** treatment at a rural federally qualified health center.

Methods

- ASAM CONTINUUM® intake assessment was administered to patients who were new or previously lost to follow up. Established patients were excluded.
- Data between February 2022 and September 2022 was de-identified and analyzed for:
 1. **Number of patients** who met criteria for alcohol use disorder (AUD), opioid use disorder (OUD), stimulant use disorder, and other SUD (cannabis, cocaine, nicotine, non-barbiturates, solvent/inhalants, or other drugs)
 2. **Recommended treatment level** of care on initial assessment
- Levels of care recommended per ASAM CONTINUUM® intake assessment were **compared to levels of care available locally**.

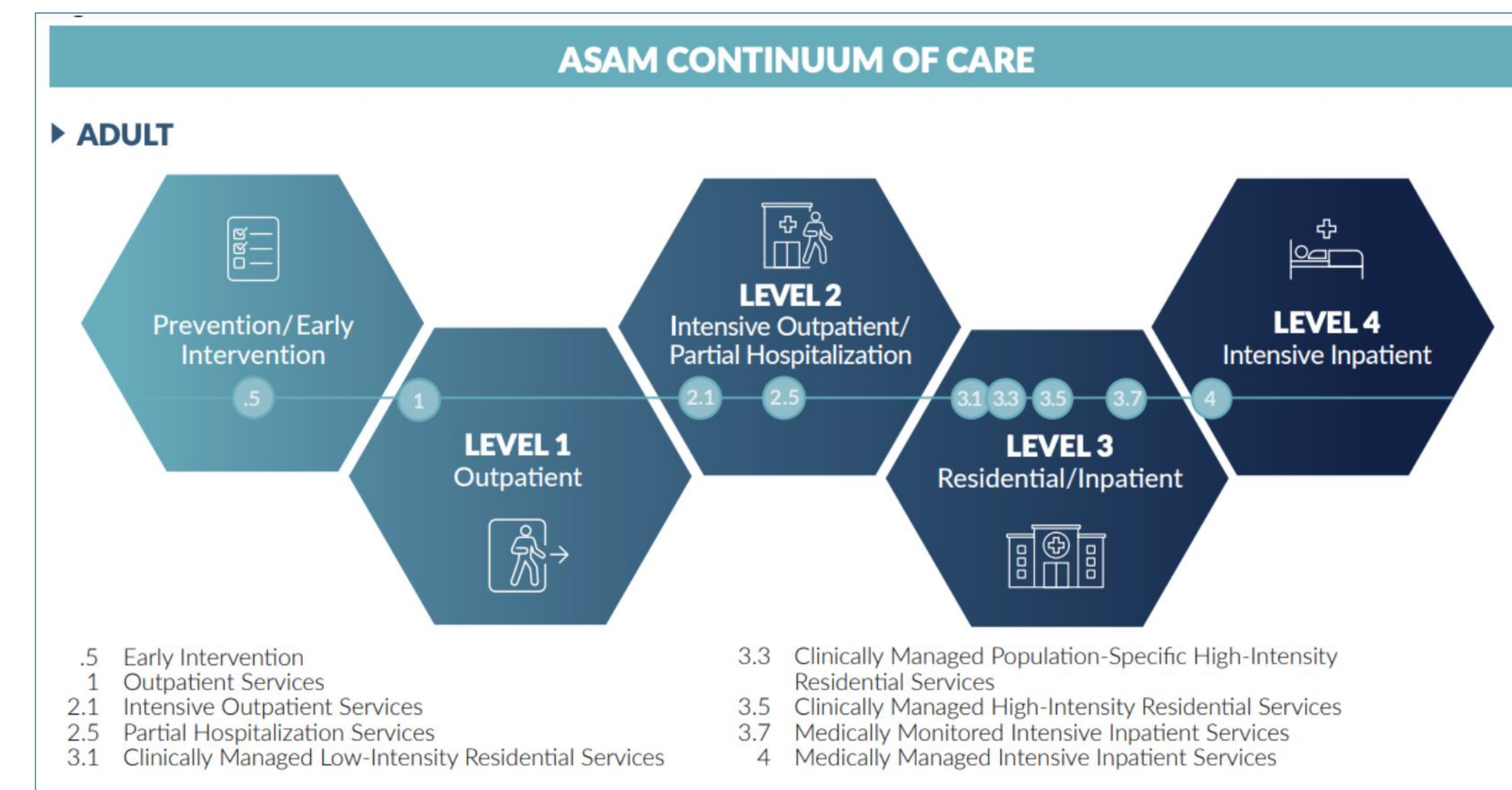


Figure 1 Levels of care defined by American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM).

ASAM Continuum of Care.
ASAM.org.
<https://www.asam.org/asam-criteria/about-the-asam-criteria>

Results

70 of 77 (90.1%) new patients over **9 months** had at least one active **Substance Use Disorder** on intake.

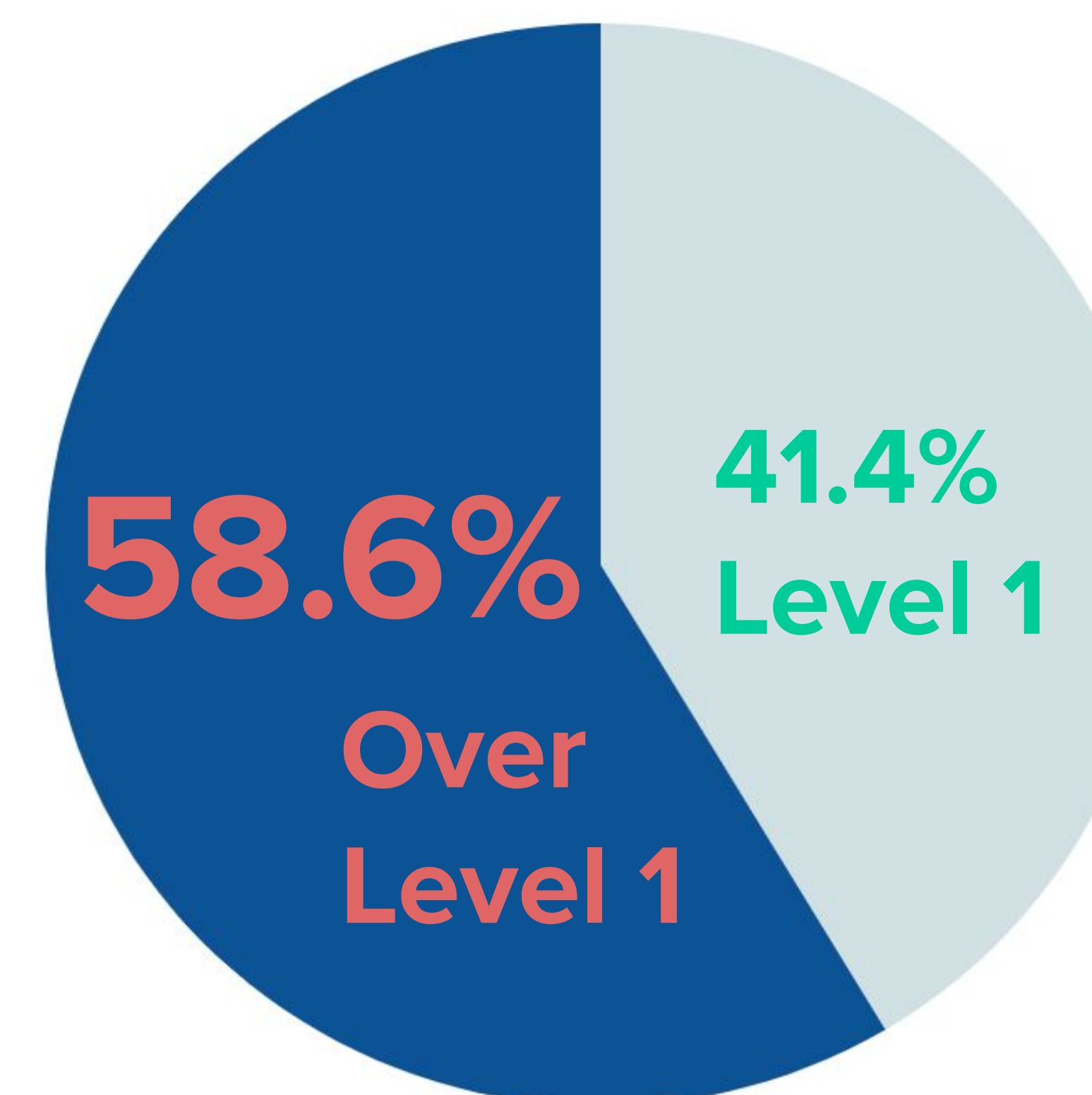
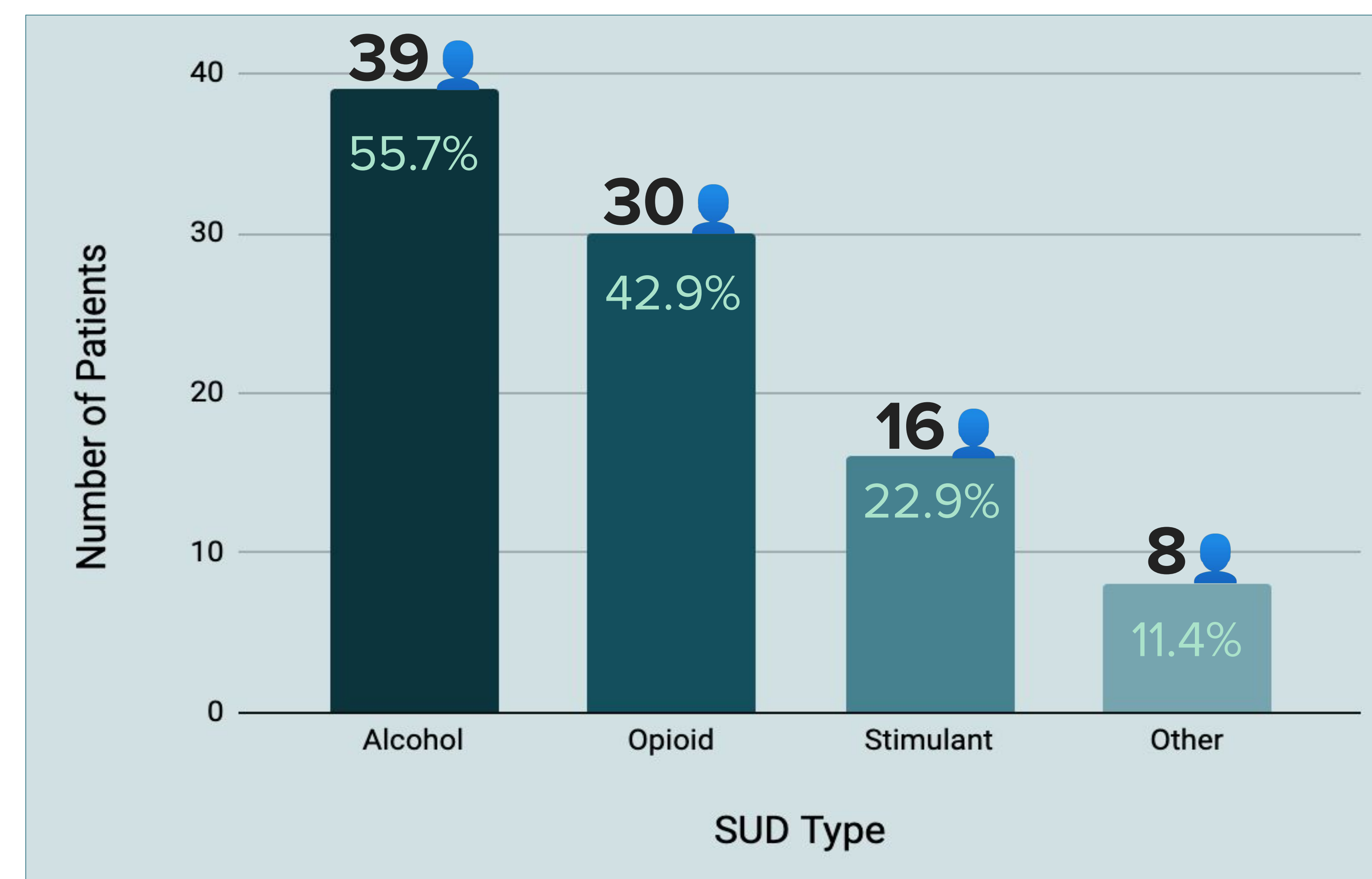


Figure 2 For 70 patients with SUD, 29 (41.4%) were recommended to receive Level 1 care, as offered by STEPS. 41 (58.6%) patients needed care higher than Level 1, outside of STEPS.

17 (24%) of these patients had **two or more substance use disorders**.

Figure 3 Of the 70 new patients, 39 (55.7%) had AUD, 30 (42.9%) had OUD, 16 (22.9%) had a stimulant use disorder, and 8 (11.4%) had other non-nicotine use disorders.



Discussion

- **Over half** of new SUD patients at STEPS were in need of care higher than Level 1, outside of STEPS.
- **Discrepancy** between SUD severity and corresponding treatment level available rurally.
- **Barriers and complications** to referring patients to treatment higher than Level 1:
 - **Limited options**
 - only one local Level 2+ site
 - Level 3+ options are in neighboring county
 - External programs have limited **capacity and eligibility**
 - **Transportation**
 - already a common barrier to **rural healthcare access**, worsened by needing to travel to external program

Conclusions

- Significant **need to expand SUD treatment** options in rural Northern California.
- ASAM CONTINUUM® intake assessments offers clinical benefits beyond individual patient care
 - Data collection for use in **quality improvement** projects and **resource allocation advocacy**

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