

Best Practices for Assisting SSI/SSDI Applicants Experiencing Homelessness

Critical Component	Requirements	Strategies
Dedicated Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide sufficient staff time to do outreach and engagement and to assist applicants with SSI/SSDI applications ▪ Arrange for training using either the in-person 2-day <i>Stepping Stones to Recovery</i> training; or the online SOAR training course ▪ Provide ongoing training and support, locally based, for case managers assisting applicants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff should have experience interviewing for and documenting functional information for writing a medical summary report ▪ Staff should be skilled in engagement and rapport building
Maintain Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ability and flexibility to hold meetings on an outreach basis ▪ Attention to detail, follow-through and ongoing effort to maintain contact ▪ Clarity on SSI/SSDI process to maintain communication with SSA and DDS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Help facilitate access to housing and other essential services when available ▪ Provide immediate response to access services so applicants feel heard and understood and contact is maintained
Authorized Representative*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use SSA-1696 Appointment of Representative form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide assistance to applicants who appoint case manager as their representative; offer others information on how to apply for SSI on their own
Medical Records and Medical Summary Report*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use SSA and agency release for each treatment source ▪ Use cover letter specifying that information will be re-released to SSA ▪ Staff write medical summary report that is co-signed by treating physician or psychologist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work proactively with medical records directors ▪ Ensure medical providers are aware of what needs to be sent ▪ Inform them of information needs ▪ Offer to copy records ▪ Ensure agency release is HIPAA compliant
Assessments*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If needed, provide or arrange for physicians or psychologist to conduct assessments, including diagnosis and functioning ▪ Provide assessment on an outreach basis, as needed ▪ Have physician or psychologist co-sign medical summary report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Arrange for training of physician or psychologist regarding information needed by DDS ▪ Explain the importance and purpose of the medical summary report to physicians and psychologists ▪ NOTE: If an assessment is needed, but not available before an application is submitted, SSA is likely to order a Consultative Exam (CE)

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Quality Review*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expert uses protocol to review application for accuracy, completeness and clarity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expert receives special training regarding review techniques
Electronic Submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete all available SSA forms online ▪ Submit medical records electronically through the ERE or DDS fax cover sheet process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide training on the use of SSA’s electronic process ▪ Sign up for Electronic Records Express with DDS
SSA/DDS Collaboration	<p>Request that SSA and DDS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Flag cases from assisting agencies ▪ Expedite the review ▪ Assign claims representatives and disability examiners who specialize in applications from individuals experiencing homelessness ▪ Communicate directly with assisting agencies about information needs for particular applications ▪ Contact assisting agency if CE needed ▪ Review and implement the SOAR Process adapted for use in the State 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Keep in ongoing contact with appropriate staff at SSA and DDS ▪ Respond quickly to requests for additional information
Avoid Consultative Examinations (CEs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide or arrange for physicians and psychologists (outdoors, if needed) to conduct needed evaluations prior to submitting documentation to DDS so that CEs are not needed (see # 5 above) ▪ Ensure collection of all medical and functional information relevant to the claim <p><i>If CE is required:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Request that applicant’s treating physician be allowed to conduct exam ▪ Make sure applicant gets to the exam; accompany applicant, if possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide and train the physician or psychologist who will conduct the thorough evaluation SSA needs to determine disability ▪ Prepare for needed diagnostic evaluations by having other clinical staff and case managers assist in collection of historical information ▪ Make least use of most expensive clinicians ▪ NOTE: Requiring a CE means that SSA does not have enough medical documentation to make a decision. CEs increase the length of time needed for SSA to make a decision.
Organizational Representative Payee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure access to appropriate representative payee services are available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop representative payee services in existing or future SSI/SSDI initiative programs ▪ Assist beneficiary to become their own payee as appropriate

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Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Incorporate strategies for encouraging consideration of and participation in employment at earliest possible time ▪ Ensure case managers are aware of work incentives under SSI and SSDI using SOAR online training curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Invite Department of Labor and vocational service providers to be part of the SOAR initiative ▪ Resources available in every state can be accessed at: http://www.chooseworkttw.net/resource/jsp/searchByState.jsp ▪ Connect with SSA Work Incentive Coordinators
Outcome Tracking	Track key data elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Date initial application submitted ▪ Date initial decision rendered ▪ Outcome of initial decision ▪ Housing status at time of application ▪ Use of SOAR Critical Components 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use the SAMHSA’s free Online Application Tracking (OAT) program for SOAR ▪ Use locally established process for tracking applications (HMIS, Excel, Access) ▪ Track additional data elements including Medicaid reimbursement and other cost savings/cost recovery
Funding and Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish funding for ongoing program implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use outcome data to make the case for sustaining or expanding SSI/SSDI application assistance ▪ Work with hospitals, State Medicaid and General Assistance offices to recoup money spent on uncompensated care and general assistance benefits; be clear that as they benefit, their assistance in continuing or expanding SSI outreach is needed ▪ Provide eligibility assistance to people at risk for homelessness in jails and prisons; link to re-entry ▪ Explore collaborations with employment, housing, and veterans programs

*Analysis of OAT conducted in 2013 found using these components significantly improved the likelihood of an application being approved (p<.001). Using them in combination with one another further increased the likelihood of application approval.