Using SOAR as a Tool to Promote Successful Reentry for People with SMI that are Involved in the Criminal Justice System

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) SOAR Technical Assistance Center
The views, opinions, and content expressed in this presentation do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, or policies of the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).
Overview and Agenda

• SOAR Overview
• SOAR Criminal Justice Initiatives
• SOAR and Criminal Justice Implementation
• Next Steps and Resources
• Question and Answer
• Discussion
What is SOAR?

- A model for assisting eligible adults and children to apply for Social Security Administration (SSA) disability benefits
- For individuals who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and have a serious mental illness, co-occurring substance use disorder, or other physical disabilities
- Sponsored by SAMHSA in collaboration with the Social Security Administration (SSA) since 2005
- All 50 states and Washington, DC currently participate
SOAR Implementation Requires Planning

Referrals

Leadership

Resources

Initial Hearings

Jail

Courts

WHO WILL COMPLETE THE SOAR APPLICATIONS?

Community collaboration

Mental Health

Substance Use

Homelessness
Social Security Disability Benefits

The Basics
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

- Eligibility based on need: low income and resources; living arrangement
- Monthly amount based on Federal Benefit Rate: $771/month (2019)*
- Date of eligibility based on Protective Filing Date/Application Date
- Health insurance: Medicaid

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)

- Eligibility based on insured status (FICA payments)
- Monthly amount based on earnings history
- Date of eligibility based on “date of onset” of disability, 5 month waiting period
- Health insurance: Medicare

*https://www.ssa.gov/ssi/text-general-ussi.htm
SSI/SSDI Eligibility: SSA’s Definition of Disability

Medical Condition(s)
- Diagnosis
- Documentation
- Duration

Functional Impairment(s)
- Severity
- Work
- Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA)
More Than Income

• Access to health care and housing
• Increased education and employment opportunities
• Decrease in incarcerations and hospitalizations
The SOAR Model

How does SOAR work?
What Makes SOAR Unique?

SOAR-trained case workers are the heroes!

**CRITICAL COMPONENTS**

01. Using the SSA-1696 Appointment of Representative form

02. Collecting & submitting medical records

03. Writing & submitting a Medical Summary Report

04. Obtaining Co-signature on a Medical Summary Report

05. Completing a quality review of applications before submission

Applications that use all five of the critical components are significantly more likely to be approved!
Community Collaboration
SOAR Leadership Structure

**SOAR TA Center**
- Facilitates strategic planning meetings
- Conducts Leadership Academies, webinars, & learning communities
- Develops resources, including SOARWorks, the SOAR Online Course, and OAT
- Provides TA at all stages of SOAR implementation

**State Team Lead**
- Facilitates state steering committee
- Directs plans to grow & sustain statewide activities
- Serves as liaison to localities
- Maintains relationships with SSA & DDS
- Submits SOAR outcomes to the TA Center

**Local Lead**
- Facilitates local steering committee
- Directs local implementation plans
- Serves as liaison to localities
- Facilitates SOAR Online Course cohorts
- Conducts SOAR Online Course Review Sessions
- Ensures quality applications & reports outcomes

**Case Manager**
- Completes high-quality SSI & SSDI applications using the SOAR model
- Communicates with local SSA & DDS representatives
- Tracks application outcomes

*OAT: Online Application Tracking Program
*SSA: Social Security Administration
*DDS: Disability Determination Services
*TA: Technical Assistance
Oh, the support you will receive!

SOAR TA Center Activities and Support

- SOAR Online Course
- SOAR Leadership Academy
- SOAR Online Application Tracking (OAT) Program
- SOARWorks Library
- Individual Technical Assistance
- SOARing Over Lunch
- SOAR eNews
- Bi-Monthly Webinars
SOAR Works!

CUMULATIVE OUTCOMES

39,213 cumulative initial approvals

45,137 people receiving benefits because of SOAR

5,924 cumulative appeal approvals

*National SOAR outcomes as of June 30, 2018
https://soarworks.prainc.com/article/soar-outcomes-and-impact
2018 National SOAR Outcomes

*As compared to a 29% approval rate for all SSI/SSDI applicants nationwide

Impact on States and Communities

**TOP 10 STATES***

- Pennsylvania
- Tennessee
- Maryland
- Arkansas
- North Carolina
- Washington
- Oklahoma
- District of Columbia
- Virginia
- New Mexico

82% approval rate

*Inclusion: Cumulative approval rates on initial application, at least 300 cumulative decisions, at least 24 decisions in 2018 (2 per month), and a 2018 approval rate above the national average. Combined, these states had 14,089 decisions.

**FINANCIAL OUTCOMES**

- $4,415 average back payment received by individuals (2,941 cases reporting)
- $4,548 average Medicaid reimbursement per applicant (143 cases reporting)
- $406M brought into the economies of the participating localities
- 17 states received new SOAR funding in 2018
- 347 full-time and part-time SOAR positions nationally

SOAR Work for Reentry

Successful reentry!
Increasing Reentry Success

• Address risks and needs from strengths-based approach
• Reduce recidivism through risk reduction
• Reduce incarcerations and justice interventions
SSA Benefits for Justice Involved Persons

Social Security and Supplemental Security Income Benefits

An individual released from incarceration may be eligible for Social Security retirement, survivors, or disability benefits if they have worked or paid into Social Security enough years. An individual released from incarceration may be eligible for Supplemental Security Income benefits if they are 65 or older, are blind, or have a disability and have little or no income and resources.

Social Security’s Definition of Disability

We consider you disabled under Social Security rules if:

- You cannot do work that you did before;
- We decide that you cannot adjust to other work because of your medical condition(s); and
- Your disability has lasted or is expected to last for at least one year or to result in death.

SSA does not pay partial or short-term disability benefits.

If you meet the above requirements, Social Security benefits also may pay:

- Your child who is under age 18, or severely disabled before age 22, or
- Your wife who is age 62 or older, or is caring for your child who is under age 16 or severely disabled before age 22.

For additional information via our pamphlets, please see the links below:

- What Prisoners Need To Know
- Entering The Community After Incarceration—How We Can Help
Prior history of incarceration alone does not make someone (in)eligible for benefits

A person can apply for benefits while incarcerated

Warrants (other than escape) should not hinder a person from applying or receiving payment

Receiving Benefits: Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incarceration Time</th>
<th>Effect on Benefits</th>
<th>Action Needed Upon Release</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1 full calendar month</td>
<td>No effect</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 12 calendar months</td>
<td>Suspended</td>
<td>Can be reinstated upon release</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12+ consecutive calendar months</td>
<td>Terminated</td>
<td>Must reapply*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*As a general rule, reapplication can be made 30 days prior to expected release date but benefits cannot begin until release. With a pre-release agreement, this time can be extended to 120 days prior to release.
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 30 days*</td>
<td>Suspended</td>
<td>Can be reinstated upon release</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*convicted and confined</td>
<td></td>
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*Recipients are eligible to continue receiving their benefits until they are convicted of a criminal offense and confined to a penal institution for more than 30 continuous days.*
SOAR Technical Assistance Awardees 2019

2019 Criminal Justice TA Awards

- California Department of State Hospitals
- Riverside University Health System in collaboration with Riverside County Jail
- Legal Council for Health Justice in collaboration with Cook County Department of Corrections
- Chattanooga City Hamilton County Mental Health Court
- Second Chance Reentry
- Volunteers of America Southeast Louisiana
SOAR Criminal Justice Outcomes

Cumulative total of SOAR-assisted initial SSI/SSDI applications for people residing in correctional facilities: 319

Average days to decision: 79 days

Approval rate: 76%

*Data accessed from the SOAR Online Application (OAT) tracking system on August 1, 2018*
The areas of criminal justice, behavioral health, and homelessness share the same clientele.

No single program can address every need.

Collaboration is key to successful reentry.
Collaboration Highlights

- Direct access to incarcerated individuals (jail/prison)
- Ability to obtain and interpret prison records
- Begin application process prior to release (SSA Agreement)
- Re-Start previously granted benefits
- Obtain Court-Order and conduct required psychological testing
- Outcomes: Awarded SSI/SSDI benefits, obtain Medicaid, stable housing, access to medical/MH services, community supports
SOAR and In-Reach Collaboration: Sing Sing CORP

- Applications done prior to release from Sing Sing prison by a SOAR trained community services agency
- Same staff who do applications follow individuals in community and access housing for them
- 90% of 130 pre-release SSI applications approved in 59 days on average
- 73% of approved within one month of release; 31% approved prior to release
Davidson County, Tennessee SOAR DCSO (Department of Corrections/Sheriff’s Office)

Collaboration through the Mayor’s Office of Innovation, Sheriff’s Office, and Metro Social Services

Initiative within the Jail was established July 2014

Sole mission of SOAR at DCSO:
- Assist incarcerated individuals with a severe and persistent mental illness who are without income and/or experiencing homelessness to re-enter into society

Outcomes: 89% of applications approved in average of 48 days
SOAR and Prison Collaboration: Oklahoma

- Funded by the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
- Oklahoma Department of Corrections staff trained to assist with accessing public benefits, e.g. SSI/SSDI
- Built and nurtured relationships with state and federal partners
  - Held regular meetings with all stakeholders
- Collaboration on 4 federal re-entry grants
  - These grants target people with co-occurring disorders
  - Also includes applying for public benefits when applicable
- Over the past 11 years, approval rates have been >80%
Mecklenburg County, NC (2016 SAMHSA SOAR CJ TA Award)

- 6 SOAR Trained staff at Criminal Justice Services (Forensic Evaluations Unit, Reentry Services, Treatment Court)
- 2 SOAR Trained staff at Jail Inmate Services
- 2 SOAR Trained Social Workers at the Public Defender’s Office
- All working in collaboration with SOAR trained community partners
Teamwork Helps Reentry Work
SOAR Online Course

Become Trained!
Choose your curriculum!

SOAR Online Courses

SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) Online Course: Adult Curriculum

The SOAR Online Course: Adult Curriculum trains case managers to assist adults (age 18+) who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and have a serious mental illness, medical impairment, and/or a co-occurring substance use disorder to apply for SSI/SSDI.

Adult Course

SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) Online Course: Child Curriculum

The SOAR Online Course: Child Curriculum trains case managers to assist children (under age 18) who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and have a serious mental illness, medical impairment, and/or a co-occurring substance use disorder to apply for SSI.

Child Course
Benefits of the SOAR Online Course

• Standardized training are provided across all geographic areas.
• SOAR Leaders can coordinate follow-up training and support.
• 20 National Association of Social Workers (NASW) CEUs available.
• Courses are FREE, web-based, and self-guided.
SOAR Online Course: Articles and Practice Case

Articles and Content

What is SOAR?

SOAR (Sustained Outreach and Recovery) is a program designed to increase access to Social Security Administration (SSA) disability benefits for eligible individuals who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and have a mental illness, medical impairment, and/or co-occurring substance use disorder.

Many people with disabilities who experience homelessness or are at risk of homelessness (e.g., those returning to the community from institutions such as jails, prisons, or hospitals) struggle to access the resources they need. Many suffer from disabling mental illnesses, co-occurring substance use, trauma, and medical issues that impact their ability to work. The path to recovery can be extraordinarily challenging when one is constantly struggling to meet basic needs. Having income and health care benefits is often a critical first step on the road to recovery.

The Social Security Administration (SSA) has two programs that can provide assistance:

- Supplemental Security Income (SSI), a needs-based program, for individuals who are blind, disabled, or elderly, with low-income resources
- Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) for blind or disabled individuals who are insured through employee and employer contributions to the Social Security Trust Fund

In most states, Medicaid and/or Medicare health insurance accompanies these benefits for those eligible.

Circumstances can impede access to income and health care benefits.

- SSA communicates mostly by mail, which is a challenge when one does not have a permanent, reliable address.
- People who are experiencing homelessness often have sporadic medical care, making it difficult to access medical records to document disability.
- Symptoms can interfere with cognitive functioning, making it difficult to complete complex forms.
- SOAR helps to overcome these barriers.

SOAR = SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery
SOAR is a Best Practice supported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

Practice Case

Practice Case: Meet Your Client

Welcome to the SOAR Online Course Practice Case! Practice Case pages appear at the end of each class, designed by a brief topic. Detailed instructions are provided under "Tasks for This Case."

Your name is "Gloria Smith" from XYZ Community Mental Health Center and you are assisting "Michael Green" to apply for SSI/SSDI.

You will learn more about Michael on each Practice Case page via interview videos, program notes, and medical records.

Let's meet Michael...

Tasks for this Case:

- RIGHT-CLICK on each link, choose "Save Target As" or "Save Link As," and save in an easily-accessible location on your computer. (Some difficulties may occur. If so, try these troubleshooting tips.)
- Review the "Guide"/"Tips" - these will help you proceed successfully through the Course/Practice Case.
- The first SSA-issued and a Medical Summary Report will be uploaded later in the Course once you have learned more about your client and are able to complete them.

VIEW THE APPLICANT INTERVIEW VIDEO

- Take notes on what you observe about the applicant.
- You can come back to this page at any time to view the video again.

Practice Case Materials:

- Practice Case Task Guide.pdf
- SSA Forms Guide.pdf
- Practice Case MIB Tips.pdf
- MIB Interview Guide and Template.docx
- SSA-5066 Appointment of Representative.pdf
SOAR and Criminal Justice Resources

The U.S. Department of Justice reports an estimated 744,600 individuals were enrolled in county and city jails by midyear 2014 (Mittman & Zhang, 2014). With incarceration rates the same—and the prevalence of serious mental illness for people incarcerated in jail averaging 14.5% among men and 37% among women—attention must be given to address the needs of a rapidly growing population of returning citizens (Steadman, et al., 2009).

The Need

641,100 people who had been sentenced to state and federal prison were released to their communities in 2013. (https://ogap.org/14/)

8 million people are released from jail each year. (https://www.cnn.com/)

40 percent of jail inmates reported at least one disability. (Bondi, Marshak, and Beroth, 2015)

Criminal justice involvement and serious mental illness pose unique challenges for community service providers and reentry staff responsible with helping people who are incarcerated to plan for successful transition to communities.

“People with serious mental illness are more likely to be arrested multiple times for the same crime, spend more time in jail before adjudication, serve longer sentences, and have higher recidivism rates than those without mental illness.” (McKinney, Jackson, and Knight, 2010)

SOAR can be a viable tool in reentry efforts for those who are at risk for homelessness upon release and can increase housing stability for those who are released to permanent housing without income.

Importance of SSI/SSDI for Justice-Involved Persons with Serious Mental Illness

Income: The income from SSI/SSDI benefits can increase housing opportunities for individuals returning to communities.

Health Insurance: People returning to communities can use the Medicaid and Medicare health insurance that comes with SSI/SSDI for physical health and mental health treatment and services.

Goal: “Decision Before Discharge” Requiring the application pre-release can facilitate expedited access to benefits upon release.

SSI Benefits + Support = Increased Housing Opportunities and Access to Treatment + Reduction in Recidivism

Identifying SOAR

SOAR Enhancement Policies and Practices

Identifying SOAR

SOAR CJ

SOAR CJC Stakeholder Team

Sample Action Plan Template

SOAR CJ Action Plan Template

SOAR CJ Sample Referral

For more information: soar@prainc.com | 913-439-7415 ext. 2 | https://soarworks.prainc.com/
Learn more about SOAR: https://soarworks.prainc.com/

Determine if you would like to become involved in SOAR and/or trained in the SOAR process.

Connect with your SAMHSA SOAR TA Center liaisons!

Reach out to your local or state SOAR leads: https://soarworks.prainc.com/directory

Register for the SOAR Online Course
Question and Answer

Let’s Discuss!
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Thank You

SAMHSA’s mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America’s communities.

www.samhsa.gov

1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727) • 1-800-487-4889 (TDD)