



EXPEDITING SSI/SSDI APPLICATIONS

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SOAR Is Sponsored By...

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services
Administration (SAMHSA)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

In collaboration with...

Social Security Administration

SOAR...

- Stands for SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery
- Is sponsored by SAMHSA; No direct funding to states
- 50 states currently participate
- Helps States and communities increase access to SSI/SSDI through:
 - ▣ Collaboration and strategic planning
 - ▣ Training
 - ▣ Technical assistance

Question...

What are the two disability programs of SSA?

SSI/SSDI Can Be Critical To:

- **Ending homelessness for people with disabilities**
- **Providing access to needed**
- **Housing**
- **Treatment**
- **Other supports**
- **Promoting Recovery**

The Problem

- ❑ Only about 10-15 percent of adults who are homeless are approved on initial application
- ❑ Only about 31 percent of **all** applicants are approved on initial application
- ❑ Appeals can take years; many potentially eligible people give up and do not appeal

SOAR Outcomes...

- As of June 2011, 44 states reported that:
 - ▣ Since 2006, nearly **10,493 individuals** had been approved for SSI/SSDI on initial application
 - ▣ Average allowance rate is **71 percent**
 - ▣ In an average of **101 days**
- In 2011 alone, SSI/SSDI brought over **\$85 million** into the state and local economies of these states

How Is This Model Different?

- Staff actively assist applicants
- Step-by-step explanation of SSI application and disability determination process
- Focuses on the initial application – “Get it right the first time!”
- Avoids appeals whenever possible
- Focuses on documenting the disability
- Recovery-oriented, comprehensive

Uses SAMHSA's *Stepping Stones to Recovery* Training Curriculum

- Based on success of University of Maryland Medical System SSI Outreach Project in Baltimore
- Engagement, relationship, and assessment are integral parts of project and curriculum
- Two-day comprehensive training on disability determination process and SOAR critical components
- Tools to expedite applications and improve approval rates

Critical Components for Success

1. Staff trained & available to assist with applications
2. Maintain contact with applicant
3. Become applicant's representative
4. Obtain medical records & write summary report
5. Collaborate with physicians for needed assessments
6. Electronic submission of information
7. Collaborate with DDS and SSA
8. Ensure quality of applications
9. Arrange for representative payees
10. Track and report outcomes

Training and Systems Change

- SOAR is not only about training, it's about changing the system
- Stakeholders collaborate to create and implement new systems and protocols that increase and expedite access to benefits
- Communities focus on implementation of SOAR critical components

How Have States and Communities Funded SOAR Efforts?

- State or local plans to address homelessness (TN, PA, MN)
- Collaborations with hospitals (GA, KY, MI, NC, OR, RI, TN)
- State PATH programs (GA, KS, IL, IN, MD, MI, MN, MT, NC, TX, WY, RI)
- Olmstead funding (NC)
- Foundations, United Way, other non-gov' t. funders (CA, CO, GA, NC, OR, RI, Palm Beach, FL)
- Applying for AmeriCorps State or VISTA members (GA, MI, NC, TN)
- State or county general assistance programs (UT, NJ, FL, MN)
- Working with corrections (CT, GA, MI, NJ, NY, OK, Miami, FL, Contra Costa, CA)
- Using outcomes to argue for additional resources (KY, PA, TN, UT, RI)
- Partnering with schools of Social Work for internships (GA, MI, TN, RI)
- Asking state medical association for pro bono assessments (WV)



SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery

for people who are homeless

A FEW STELLAR EXAMPLES

Successful Models: Nashville

- Nashville's 10-year plan funds 3 positions in community mental health center
- Since May 2006, **96% of 233** applications approved in an average of **70 days**
- Works closely with medical records staff of local primary care clinics and hospitals
- Outreach ensures contact with applicants
- Treatment provided in agency where SSI project is housed

Successful Models: North Carolina

- In 2 years **77%** of applications were **approved** in an average of **109 days**
- **Dedicated Benefits Specialists:**
 - **Mecklenburg:** 3 FTE dedicated to SOAR, SOAR Workgroup that meets regularly
 - **Asheville/Buncombe:** 2 FTE dedicated to SOAR; heads local SOAR caseworker group
 - **Winston-Salem/Forsyth:** 2 FTE dedicated to SOAR
 - **Durham:** 4 FTE dedicated to SOAR; Disability Workgroup meets regularly
 - **Greenville/Pitt:** DSS dedicating 2 staffers PT to SOAR; 1 FTE with the County
 - **Wilmington/New Hanover:** 1 FTE dedicated to SOAR
 - **Wake:** 1 FTE dedicated to SOAR, SOAR Workgroup that meets regularly
 - **Iredell:** 1 FTE dedicated to SOAR
 - **Cumberland:** 1 FTE dedicated to SOAR
 - **ECBH:** 2 FTE dedicated to SOAR

Successful Models: Philadelphia

- State contracts with the Homeless Advocacy Project in Philadelphia
- Four separate SOAR projects:
 - Homeless adults – funded by City OSH
 - “Aging out” youth -- funded by State DHS
 - HPRP project for “newly homeless” persons
 - DPW funded project for TANF recipients
- Since December 2007, 717 applications have been approved in 32 days on average; 3 applications denied

Successful Models: Portland, OR

- ❑ Central City Concern's BEST Team
- ❑ Strongly linked to provision of housing
- ❑ Approval rate of 91% for 270 applications in average of 50 days
- ❑ \$539,000 of past medical bills became reimbursable through retroactive Medicaid for 37 applicants
- ❑ Funding from local hospital, foundation, City of Portland and Portland Housing Authority

Successful Models: Corrections

- SSI applications done prior to release from **Sing Sing prison** by a community services agency in NYC
 - ▣ Same staff who do applications follow folks in community and access housing for them
 - ▣ 90% of 130 pre-release SSI applications approved in average of 86 days

- SOAR implemented in **Miami jail diversion** program
 - ▣ 72% of 417 applications approved in average of 75 days
 - ▣ **Recidivism declined 70% to 22%** at 12 months after release
 - ▣ In 2009, the team demonstrated **\$6,913,248 in savings** to the state of Florida

Making This Happen in Your Community...

Reallocate existing resources. Try it on a small scale.
Show success. Make the case for more staff

- Time spent up-front on assessment and benefits acquisition is an effective way to engage people
- Serving people who have income and health insurance makes it easier and quicker to access housing, treatment, and other supports
- Accessing SSI/SSDI and Medicaid/Medicare in 90 days or less frees up resources to assist others

Ask the SOAR TA Center for Help

- ❑ Expand SOAR to new audiences or communities
- ❑ Build state, local or regional planning groups
- ❑ Improve collaboration with SSA or DDS
- ❑ Explore strategies for funding and sustainability
- ❑ Build training capacity
- ❑ Increase allowance rates & quality of applications

TA is funded by SAMHSA at no cost to you!



SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery

for people who are homeless

SOAR in Rhode Island



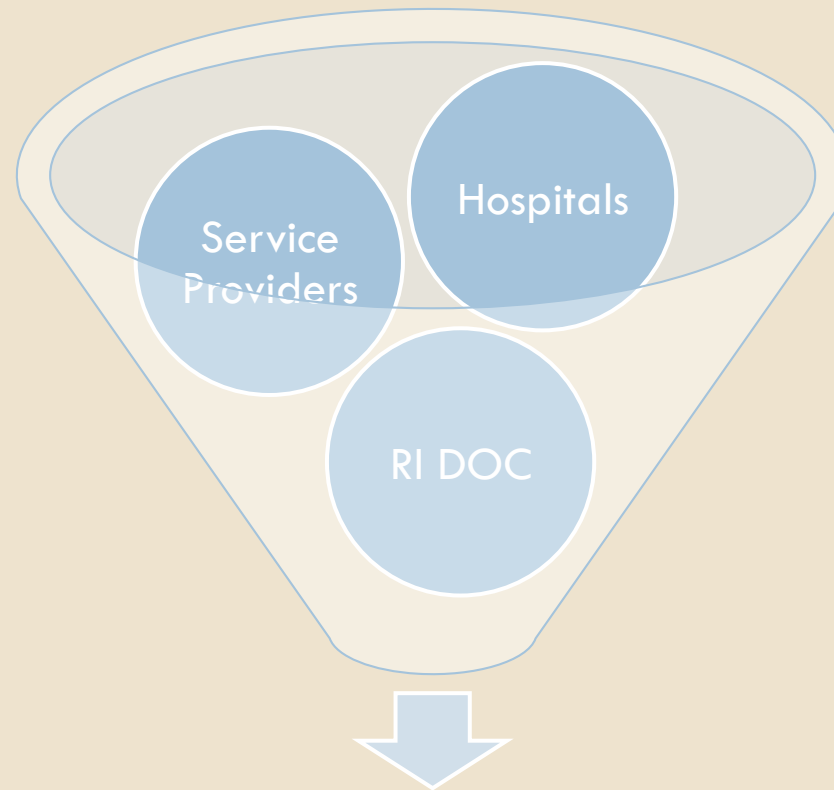
...Rhode Island

- Started in 2006 with funding from Butler Hospital and the Corporation for Supportive Housing
- Launched and administered by the Mental Health Association of Rhode Island
- Staffed by: ACCESS-RI, 1 FTE SOAR Case Manager
- Resulted in \$167,000 ROI for Butler Hospital

Since 2006...

- Processed over 180 applications
- Average success rate: 72%
- Average days until decision: 92 days

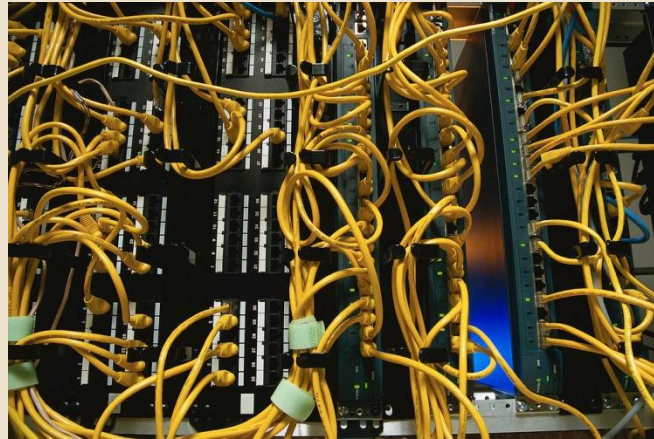
Model I



SOAR Case Manager

Model II

- Over 150 case managers trained
- 1.0 FTE State Coordinator



Model III: Current



Elements of Success

- Intense technical assistance with well- defined process to ensure high quality of work
- Ensure meaningful participation of collaborators
- Include SSA/DDS as part of the team
- Meet regularly as a team
- Logo or brand recognition



TIPS.

- Do it for free (...a couple of times)
- Start small
- Relationships are key
- Gather data
- Develop collaboratives based on population served or geographic area (justice- involved, domestic violence service providers, DCYF youth transitioning)

Tools

- Cost Benefit Analysis
- Memorandum of Understanding
- SOAR Case Manager Job Description
- Team Meetings, Trainings, Activities

No Money? No Problem.

- Let's talk about opportunities to bring SOAR to/ or enhance SOAR in, your community?

For More Information

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