# Washington SOAR Process

Steps to Completing an SSI/SSDI Application Using the SOAR Model

After completing the SOAR Online Course, case workers implementing the SOAR model with SSI/SSDI applications should complete the following steps as part of a standard SOAR workflow. This process is a collaborative effort between the SOAR provider, the Social Security Administration (SSA), and Disability Determination Services (DDS) that enables SOAR case workers to complete the SSI/SSDI application process efficiently and effectively.

## Step One: Receive Referral

* Request that external providers use the SOAR Referral Tool*[[1]](#endnote-2)* to make referrals.
* Track the referrals received in the SOAR Referral Tracking Worksheet.
* Review the Identifying SOAR Applicants document and the [SSA’s Listing of Impairments](https://www.ssa.gov/disability/professionals/bluebook/AdultListings.htm) to help determine whether the applicant is potentially eligible.
* Contact the potential applicant to complete the [SSA-3288: Consent for Release of Information](https://www.ssa.gov/forms/ssa-3288.pdf) and medical release forms if records from the referring source are unavailable.
	+ Submit the SSA-3288 to SSA to confirm whether there are any prior or pending applications. This can be faxed to the SSA Homeless Coordinator.
	+ You may also call SSA with the applicant present at 1-800-772-1213 to gather basic information about pending claims.
* If it is an appropriate referral, schedule an intake meeting.

## Step Two: Complete SOAR Intake

* Use the SOAR Initial Meeting Worksheet to gather information and take notes.
* Have the applicant sign agency releases for all collateral sources, (i.e., family members, employers, etc.).
* Have the applicant sign **two** release forms for each treatment provider: an agency release (Sample Agency Authorization for Release of Medical Information) **and** an [SSA-827: Authorization to Disclose Information to the Social Security Administration](https://www.ssa.gov/forms/ssa-827.pdf). Signing both releases provides HIPAA-compliant “compound authorization” which allows you to gather records and re-release them to SSA.
* Complete and have the applicant sign the [SSA-1696: Appointment of Representative](https://www.ssa.gov/forms/ssa-1696.pdf). You will not submit this form until the complete application packet is submitted (Step Nine).
* Schedule weekly meetings with the applicant before the end of the SOAR intake meeting.

## Step Three: Request Records from Treatment Sources

* Request records from two years prior to the onset of disability (date the applicant last earned [Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA)](https://www.ssa.gov/oact/cola/sga.html)) and any older records that may have information supporting the onset of the applicant’s symptoms.
* Send a records request packet to each treatment source:
	+ Cover Letter (Sample Medical Records Request Cover Letter)
	+ Agency release
	+ SSA-827
* Record the submitted requests in the Medical Records Tracking Spreadsheet.
	+ Follow up after one week for any records not yet received.
* Review all records received. Confirm symptoms correspond with [SSA’s Listing of Impairments](https://www.ssa.gov/disability/professionals/bluebook/AdultListings.htm).
	+ If symptoms are documented in the records, continue to the next step.
	+ If symptoms are not documented but are easily observed, continue to the next step and recommend a consultative exam in the Medical Summary Report (MSR).
	+ If symptoms are not documented or easily observed, encourage the applicant to seek treatment and revisit the application process when additional supporting records are available.

## Step Four: Establish Protective Filing Date (PFD)

* The PFD is established by **initiating** the Online Disability Benefits Application.
	+ Go to [SSA’s website](https://www.ssa.gov/) and click “Apply for Benefits.”
	+ Select “An Adult (age 18 and over),” “Disability,” and “Supplemental Security Income for Disability.” Click “Learn how to apply” and then “Start Application.”
	+ Agree to the Benefits Application Terms of Service, click “Next” and then “Start a New Application.”
* You will need to indicate whether the applicant is with you.
	+ If the applicant is with you, choose “I am applying for myself.” The applicant will then be prompted to sign-in to or create their [*my* Social Security](https://www.ssa.gov/myaccount/) account.
	+ If the applicant is not with you or cannot create a my Social Security account, choose “I am helping someone who is not with me.” You will be able to proceed to the next step, but SSA will need to follow up with the applicant after the application is submitted.
* After providing basic identifying information about the applicant, a **re-entry number** will be assigned.
	+ Do not proceed past this screenuntil you are prepared to submit the complete application packet (Step 8).
	+ Choose “Save & Exit.”



* + Print the webpage AND write down the re-entry number. You will not be able to get back into the application without it!
* You now have **60 days** to complete and submit the application.
* You may receive a Protective Filing Closeout letter from SSA. This is simply a notice that they have not received the complete application. You can proceed with preparing the application.

## Step Five: Continue to Gather Supporting Documentation

Steps Five and Six will be done in conjunction with one another. Best practices recommend completing one form at each weekly meeting.

* Meet with the applicant weekly using the Medical Summary Report (MSR) Interview Guide.
* Gather information and record it in the appropriate section of the MSR Template.
* Continue to review medical and mental health records as they come in.
* Continue follow-up efforts for any outstanding records requests.

## Step Six: Complete Forms and Documents for the Online Application and Paper Packet

Fill in and sign all forms completely. Signing forms in blue ink is recommended to distinguish them as originals. Keep a copy of each signed form in the applicant’s file. For details on completing these forms, visit the [SOAR website](https://soarworks.samhsa.gov/library-and-tools?f%5B0%5D=type%3A639&page=0).

* [SSA-8000: Application for Supplemental Security Income: The applicant will sign and submit the paper form with the complete packet (Step 9).](https://soarworks.samhsa.gov/article/social-security-administration-ssa-forms-and-resources)
* [SSA-16: Application for SSDI](https://www.ssa.gov/forms/ssa-16-bk.pdf): Use the paper form as a worksheet and transfer information to the online application when ready to submit (Step 8).
* [SSA-3368: Adult Disability Report](https://www.ssa.gov/forms/ssa-3368-bk.pdf): Use the paper form as a worksheet and transfer information to the online application when ready to submit (Step 8).
* [SSA-3369: Work History Report](https://www.ssa.gov/forms/ssa-3369.pdf) (upon request from DDS): Collect as much information as possible and use the Remarks section to describe the applicant’s functional struggles throughout their work history.
* [SSA-3373: Function Report-Adult](https://www.ssa.gov/forms/ssa-3373-bk.pdf): Collect as much information as possible and use the Remarks section to describe the applicant’s functional struggles.
* [SSA-821: Work Activity Report](https://www.ssa.gov/forms/ssa-821.pdf) (if applicable): Submitted if the applicant is working or has worked since the alleged onset date.

## Step Seven: Complete the Medical Summary Report

* Finish writing the MSR and send it to your [SAMHSA SOAR TA Center Liaison](https://soarworks.samhsa.gov/state-directory) for review.
* Send the final MSR to the applicant’s treatment provider for review and a co-signature.
	+ Plan for at least a one-week turnaround time for obtaining a provider’s co-signature.
	+ A co-signature by an [Acceptable Medical Source (AMS)](https://secure.ssa.gov/poms.nsf/lnx/0422505003) raises the MSR from “collateral information” to “medical evidence.”

## Step Eight: Complete and Submit the Online Disability Benefits Application

* Complete the Online Disability Benefits Application **within 60 days** of setting the PFD.
	+ Go to <https://www.ssa.gov> and click “Apply for Benefits.”
	+ Select “An Adult (age 18 and over),” “Disability,” and “Supplemental Security Income for Disability.” Click “Learn how to apply” and then “Finish Existing Application.”
	+ Agree to the Benefits Application Terms of Service, click “Next” and then “Return to Saved Application Process.”
	+ Enter the applicant’s Social Security Number and the re-entry number you received when you set the PFD.
* Use the information collected on the paper SSA-16 and SSA-3368 to complete the online application:
	+ Part 1: Background Information (SSA-16)
	+ Part 2: Disability Information (SSA-3368)
		- Enter the following information in the Remarks section:
			* “SOAR Application – Packet to Follow on or before [Date]”
			* “Represented by [SOAR case worker name]”
			* “Applicant is experiencing homelessness” (if they meet [SSA’s definition](https://soarworks.samhsa.gov/article/definitions-of-homelessness)).
			* Provide applicant and/or SOAR case worker contact information.
		- The applicant MUST be with you to electronically sign the application.
	+ Part 3: Electronically sign the Medical Release (SSA-827)
		- This allows SSA and DDS to obtain medical records for the applicant.

## Step Nine: Submit the Paper Application Packet

* Submit the complete paper packet to SSA **no more than two days** after submitting the Online Disability Benefits Application.
* Submit the packet via **one** of the following methods:
	+ Mail to the local SSA field office.
	+ Deliver to an SSA drop-box (where available).
	+ Deliver the packet in person:
		- Contact SSA and request an appointment. This is not a request for an applicant interview; it is only for the case worker to submit the application packet. Begin attempts to contact SSA at least 1-2 weeks before the 60-day deadline to allow for potential scheduling conflicts. (This may not be an option at all offices.)
		- If you do not have an appointment, take a number when you arrive and wait to be seen.
* Include the following documents in the complete SOAR packet:
	+ SOAR Checklist for Initial Claims
	+ SSA-827: Authorization to Disclose Information to the Social Security Administration
	+ SSA-1696: Appointment of Representative
	+ SSA-8000: Application for Supplemental Security Income
	+ SSA-3369: Work History Report (if applicable)
	+ SSA-3373: Function Report-Adult (if applicable)
	+ SSA-821: Work Activity Report (if applicable)
* Note: Medical records and the MSR are not submitted to SSA, but rather to DDS via [Electronic Records Express (ERE)](https://www.ssa.gov/ere/) or a bar-coded coversheet provided by DDS.

## Step Ten: SSA and DDS Process the Claim

### SSA Responsibilities

* Review forms for accuracy and determine if the applicant meets the non-medical eligibility criteria.
	+ If the applicant is not eligible for SSDI (because they are not currently insured by the program), they will receive a denial letter for SSDI, but the SSI application will still be pending with DDS.
* Contact the SOAR case worker or the applicant if additional information is needed to process the claim.
* Send SOAR-identified application to DDS electronically.

### DDS Responsibilities

* Receive the claim from SSA and assign it to a disability examiner
* Fax the SOAR case worker a bar-coded cover sheet for the submission of medical records, upon request.
* Review all medical records submitted, including the MSR. Request additional records as necessary.
* Determine if additional information is needed regarding the applicant’s disability and schedule a consultative exam (CE) as necessary.
* Make a medical determination on the case once all evidence has been reviewed.

### SOAR Case Worker Responsibilities

* Obtain contact information for the SSA claims specialist and DDS examiner and stay in contact.
* Once the case has been transferred to DDS, submit all medical records and the MSR.
	+ Use ERE or request a bar-coded cover sheet from DDS and submit via fax.
* If more than 60 days have passed since medical records have been submitted, follow up with the DDS examiner to inquire whether additional information is needed.
* If a CE is scheduled, the SOAR case worker and the applicant will be notified by mail. Contact DDS to confirm that the applicant will attend the appointment.

## Step Eleven: A Decision is Made

* After DDS makes a medical decision, the claim is returned to SSA for a final, non-medical determination.
* SSA will send a letter to the SOAR case worker and the applicant notifying them of the decision.
* If the case is approved, the benefits will go into pay status, and the money will be directly deposited into the applicant’s bank account.
	+ If there is additional information to be confirmed (including if the applicant does not have a bank account), SSA will schedule a Preeffectuation Review Contact (PERC) appointment to set up payments.
	+ If SSA determines that the applicant requires a payee to help manage their benefits, the applicant and the payee must attend an in-person appointment to set up payee arrangements.
* If the case is denied, SSA will send a letter explaining why the unfavorable decision was made.
	+ Read more about [reviewing denial notices](https://soarworks.samhsa.gov/article/reviewing-denial-notices-and-the-electronic-folder) and the [appeals process](https://soarworks.samhsa.gov/article/a-toolkit-for-case-managers-submitting-ssissdi-appeals-using-the-soar-model).

## Step Twelve: Track Your Outcomes

* Track the outcomes of your SOAR-assisted SSI/SSDI applications in the [SOAR Online Application Tracking (OAT) system](https://soartrack.samhsa.gov/).
* OAT is a free, web-based program that is easy to use, and HIPAA- compliant.
* Contact your [State Team Lead or SOAR TA Center Liaison](https://soarworks.samhsa.gov/state-directory) to find out more.

## SSA Contacts (Homeless Coordinators)

SSA Homeless Coordinators

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Office Name | Homeless Coordinator | Email Address | Phone | Extension |
| Seattle Regional Office: Center for Disability | Sierra Burgess | sierra.burgess@ssa.gov  | 206-615-2098 |  |
| WA Public Affairs Specialist | Kirk Larson | Kirk.Larson@ssa.gov  | 206-615- 2650 |  |
| Bellevue | Mike Tselnik | Mike.Tselnik@ssa.gov | 866-574-2534 | 14811 |
| Bellingham | Laurine Tilbury | Laurine.Tilbury@ssa.gov | 866-256-6906 | 10309 |
| Burien | Orlando Dollente | Orlando.Dollente@ssa.gov | 866-964-7385 | 26235 |
| Centralia | Bonnie Holden | Bonnie.Holden@SSA.GOV | 855-848-7942 | 22902 |
| Everett | Shawn Goins | Shawn.Goins@ssa.gov | 866-592-2734 | 21405 |
| Grays Harbor | Tammy Brooks | Tammy.Brooks@ssa.gov | 855-634-4197 | 20807 |
| Kent | Shoira Bekchanova | Shoira.bekchanova@ssa.gov | 866-931-4491 | 19004 |
| Kitsap | Julie Edmondson | Julie.Edmondson@ssa.gov | 855-820-0101 | 11047 |
| Lacey | Tom Duguay | Tom. Duguay@ssa.gov | 866-755-6199 | 20415 |
| Longview | Molly Smith | Molly.Smith@ssa.gov | 866-495-0044 | 20013 |
| Lynnwood | Vlad Krivoroutchko | Vladislav.Krivoroutchko@ssa.gov | 877-453-1388 | 16011 |
| Mt. Vernon | Jennifer Stephens | Jennifer.Stephens@ssa.gov | 866-931-6149 | 23404 |
| Port Angeles | Julie Edmondson | Julie.Edmondson@ssa.gov | 855-820-0101 | 11047 |
| Puyallup | Twee Vo | Twee.Vo@ssa.gov | 855-886 9627 | 12900 |
| Seattle Metro | Karen Watts | Karen.Watts@ssa.gov | 866-494-3172 | 15665 |
| Seattle North | Monique Ford | Monique.Ford@ssa.gov | 866-613-2741 | 13835 |
| Spokane | Kristina Knox | Kristina.Knox@ssa.gov | 866-331-7088 | 22489 |
| Tacoma | Elizabeth Young | Elizabeth.P.young@ssa.gov | 888 613 5221 | 25669 |
| Tri Cities | Holly Barnhart | Holly.Barnett@ssa.gov | 866-269-6881 | 11320 |
| Vancouver | Amanda Thulin | Amanda.Thulin@ssa.gov | 866-605-8967 | 20603 |
| Walla Walla | Kimberly Forster | kimberly.forster@ssa.gov | 866-964-7391 | 22809 |
| Wenatchee | Angelica Solorio | Angelica.Solorio@ssa.gov | 877-669-3125 | 28622 |
| Yakima | Emmanuel Pedroza | Emmanuel.Pedroza@SSA.GOV | 866-338-8552 | 11611 |



## DDS Contact (Professional Relations)

Washington DDS

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Office | Name | Phone | Fax | Email |
| Olympia | Uyen Kashani | 360-664-7437 | 360-586-3578 | Uyen.Kashani@ssa.gov |
| Professional Relations Specialist | Brianne Leon | 360.584.5674 | 833-656-1248 | Brianne.leon@ssa.gov |

\*The Professional Relations Specialist will delegate to other offices and staff as necessary.

## VA Medical Records Access Protocol for SOAR Providers And DDS

* The DDS and the VA have an agreement for the electronic transfer of records.
* The DDS can obtain these records in a very short period and prefers to do so directly with the VA since these records are formatted to be compatible with the SSA’s electronic claims system.
* It is helpful for the SOAR staff to be familiar with the content of the VA records and to clarify/amplify any relevant information in the medical summary report written by SOAR-trained staff.
* If the SOAR provider is not a part of the VA, when appropriate, he or she should collaborate with the appropriate VA staff for the submission of the VA records in accordance with the VA/DDS agreement.
* The SOAR provider should maintain regular and consistent communication with the DDS to assure that all applicant information is submitted in accordance with the VA agreement and the SOAR process.

## Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) SSI Facilitation

* If an individual is experiencing homelessness and working with a SOAR SP, the SP may contact the SSIF in the CSO to work in collaboration and assist the individual in applying for SSI/SSDI.
* SSIF’s must adhere to agency specific timeframes when facilitating an application for a cash assistance client. Communicate about the status of the application process with the SSIF.
* The SSIF or SP will ask the applicant to sign a release of information so that the SP and SSIF can share information.
* The SOAR provider and SSIF should communicate throughout the application process regarding the progress of the SSI/SSDI application, potential resources available, contact information changes, etc.
* If the individual receives ABD cash benefits and applies for SSI, he or she will be asked to sign a reimbursement agreement (IARA) with the CSO. If approved for SSI, ABD benefits paid out during the time of SSI eligibility are reimbursed back to the State. This does NOT apply to SSDI or VA benefits.
* The CSO offers food assistance, cash assistance, childcare, medical benefits, or long-term care. To find out more about these services, visit the [website](https://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa/community-services-offices/services-we-offer).
* To apply, go [online](https://www.washingtonconnection.org/home/) or apply by phone at 1-877-501-2233 or in person (when the offices re-open) at any Community Services Office.

### DSHS CSD Liaison for SOAR Providers by Region

* Region 1 - Darla Johnson, darla.johnson@dshs.wa.gov , 509-202-7065
* Region 2 - Rena Guadagnoli, rena.guadagnoli@dshs.wa.gov , 206-496-4158
* Region 3 – Marilyn Meldrich, marilyn.meldrich@dshs.wa.gov , 253-281-8930
1. SOAR Tools and Worksheets (noted with italics) can be accessed on the SOAR [website](https://soarworks.samhsa.gov/article/soar-tools-and-worksheets). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)