

2023 SAMHSA SOAR APRIL E-NEWS

Who Needs to Fly When You Can SOAR?



April 28 is National Superhero Day, and while SOAR-trained caseworkers may not wear capes or have the ability to fly, they are absolutely superheroes who can transform lives!

The ability to use the SOAR model to submit a complete SSI/SSDI application on someone's behalf to the Social Security Administration (SSA) is powerful! Our goal as providers is to tell the applicant's story and clearly link their diagnoses to their functional limitations and ability to work; by doing this, those that evaluate the application will be able to "see" the applicant and get to know the whole person.

SOAR has an average approval rate of 65% on initial application and 81% among the top ten states; these numbers represent thousands of lives changed through the power of SOAR-trained case workers! That's some real Superhero action worth celebrating!

April is the Month of the Military Child

In recognition of the Month of the Military Child, we want to highlight SAMHSA SOAR TA Center resources for children and families in the armed forces community.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) grant program is critical to preventing and ending homelessness for Veteran families. SSVF can provide Veteran families with time-sensitive, housing-focused interventions, such as linking to mainstream resources and income supports that promote housing stability. The SSVF and SOAR Integration Toolkit provides detailed guidance from the VA about how to incorporate the SOAR model into services for Veterans and their families.

The SOAR Online Course: Child Curriculum trains caseworkers 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. Children with disabilities living in military families may benefit from the additional income and health insurance available with SSI and Medicaid eligibility.



April Spotlights

SOAR Leadership Academy: Tucson, Arizona

From February 21-23, 2023, the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center held a SOAR Leadership Academy in Tucson, Arizona. It was facilitated by Dan Coladonato, Pam Heine, and Abby Kirkman, and there were 26 participants representing 20 states! Hal Zawacki, Assistant Regional Administrator for SAMHSA Region 9, also participated in the event. Guests from the San Francisco Regional SSA Office and New Mexico Disability Determination Services (DDS) presented and answered questions. We are excited to see how our new leaders will SOAR in their communities!



See How SOAR Works



SOAR Tip: Providing SOAR Assistance for Someone who Uses Marijuana

With medical and recreational marijuana legalization expanding in many states, the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center is often asked how marijuana use impacts SSI/SSDI applications. A DDS Program Manager provided clarification on the topic:

DDS evaluates recreational marijuana use the same way it would alcohol use. If evidence is presented that shows the applicant's symptoms persist, even when not using, then the marijuana is not considered material to the applicant's disability and benefits can be awarded.

For recreational marijuana use, it is important to provide as much detail as possible about how the applicant experiences symptoms when not using. If the applicant uses prescribed medical marijuana, the examiner will evaluate it like any other prescribed medication. The impact of medical marijuana on the applicant's functioning should be well documented in the Medical Summary Report. For example, if someone has trouble staying awake or is unable to operate a vehicle when taking medical marijuana, DDS will consider these side effects limitations to their functioning.



SOARing Over Lunch Conference Call

April 11, 2023, 1:00-2:00 p.m. ET

The SAMHSA SOAR TA Center holds informal monthly calls designed to help support SOAR efforts across the country. [Read more about SOARing Over Lunch and add it to your calendar.](#)



SOAR OAT and Outcomes Orientation

April 18, 2023, 2:00-3:00 p.m. ET

~ **This session is intended for SOAR-trained practitioners!** ~

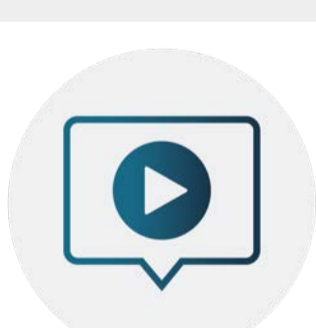
Have you registered for the SOAR Online Application Tracking (OAT) program? If so, are you using OAT consistently?

If you answered "No" to either of these questions, please attend this SOAR OAT and Outcomes Orientation to learn the ins and outs of successfully reporting the outcomes of your SOAR-assisted SSI/SSDI applications.

We will take you step-by-step through the process from registering for an account to entering details about the application. We will also address many common questions and discuss how you can use your outcomes to promote SOAR in your community!

[Register Now!](#)

In Case You Missed It



SOAR Webinar: Building SOAR Collaborations with Medical Providers

This webinar, held on March 8, 2023, spotlighted successful collaborations between SOAR practitioners and medical providers. This webinar will be helpful to SOAR providers who are looking for guidance on how to collaborate with those who are authorized by SSA to provide medical evidence of impairments (i.e., acceptable medical sources (AMS)). The link to the recording can be found on the SOARWorks website.

[Access the Recording and Slides](#)

Partner Updates

NOSSCR'S Hearing Format Election Statement

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The National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives (NOSSCR) is a specialized bar association for attorneys and advocates who represent Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income claimants throughout the adjudicative process.

NOSSCR's newly developed Hearing Format Election Statement is a one-page, fillable form that provides a simple way for claimants to notify the Office of Hearings Operations (OHO) how they want to appear at their hearing (in-person, Video Teleconference (VTC), telephone, or Online Video Hearing (OVH)).

If you have started using this form, please share your experience with your [SOAR TA Center Liaison!](#)

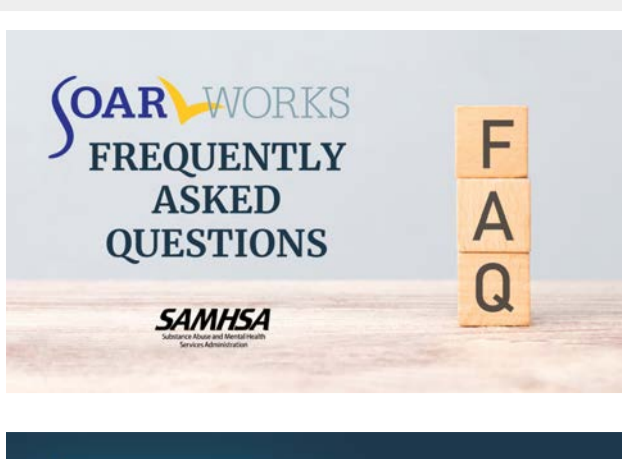
SOAR Jobs



- Maryland:** *SOAR Case Manager – EveryMind:* Meet with consumers experiencing homelessness, case managers, family members, medical support members, etc., to collect information, review medical records, and put together applications to apply for benefits.
- North Carolina:** *Population Health Specialist – DukeWell:* Develop, implement, and evaluate comprehensive patient plans to ensure that patients receive appropriate overall medical care, therapy, and training services.
- Texas:** *SOAR Specialist – Integral Care:* Complete SOAR applications and provide specialized training, advocacy, and assistance to consumers who may be eligible and wish to apply for SSI/SSDI benefits.
- Virginia:** *Behavioral Health Clinician II/PATH SOAR – City of Virginia Beach Behavioral Health Division:* Assist in outreach efforts to identify citizens experiencing chronic homelessness and coordinate and prepare Social Security Disability cases using the SOAR Model.

Learn more about these positions on the [SOARWorks website](#). Do you have a job posting you would like to share with the SOAR community? Please submit it to the [SAMHSA SOAR TA Center!](#)

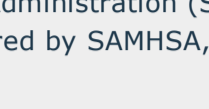
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The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) Technical Assistance (TA) Center is sponsored by SAMHSA, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

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