

2023 SAMHSA SOAR
MAY E-NEWS**New SOAR Resource: Developing SSI/SSDI Applications for Individuals with Long COVID**

This new resource is a supplement to the Medical Summary Report (MSR) Interview Guide and Template and a tool for case development. It provides guidance for working with individuals who are experiencing symptoms of Long COVID and includes sample questions that may be helpful in your interviews. While Long COVID is not a condition specified in [SSA's Listing of Impairments](#), SSA has issued instructions to its employees about how an allegation or diagnosis of COVID-19 should be evaluated when determining disability.

[Access Developing SSI/SSDI Applications for Individuals with Long COVID](#)

May Spotlights**May is Mental Health Awareness Month!****Outreach Toolkit**

[Mental Health America's \(MHA\) May is Mental Health Month Outreach Toolkit](#) includes digital and printable resources to help individuals and organizations raise mental health awareness during the month of May. The toolkit includes activities, newsletter articles, social media resources, zoom backgrounds, posters, and more!

Our Shared Experiences

The month of May also marks the shared trauma of both the COVID-19 pandemic and the murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020. This shared experience placed a spotlight on disparities and differences in the care and treatment that COVID-19 patients received, as well as how those disparities also put BIPOC communities at higher risk of contracting COVID-19 in the first place.

The evidence associated with health care disparities during the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with the heightened level of shared stress experienced by the death of George Floyd, prompted an increased awareness of the importance of mental health and well-being for BIPOC communities.

While we promote the importance of Mental Health Awareness this month, we also encourage you to continue addressing disparities within your own agencies to increase access to SOAR services.

For more information on Mental Health Awareness Month, Mental Health/COVID-19 and BIPOC Communities, please visit:

- [Black and African American Communities and Mental Health](#)
- [BIPOC Communities and COVID-19](#)
- [How Organizations Can Support the Mental Health of Black Employees](#)

National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) Annual Conference**41ST ANNUAL
Protecting Our
Children Conference**

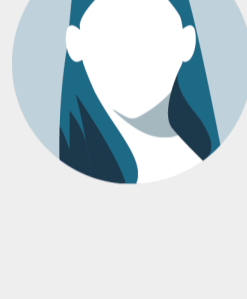
Healing Our Spirits: Nurturing and Restoring Hope • April 2-5, 2023
Reno, Nevada

In early April, Amanda Starkey of the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center, had the privilege of attending and presenting at the 41st Annual [National Indian Child Welfare Association \(NICWA\) Protecting Our Children Conference](#) in Reno, Nevada. The theme of this year's event was "Healing Our Spirits: Nurturing and Restoring Hope." Amanda shared her experience:

"During the conference I was overcome with emotion, frustration, and admiration for the strong leaders and members of Indian Country. I heard stories from people who are working tirelessly for children who are often unfairly taken from their homes and placed into foster families. Often, non-Native foster parents are not informed on the traditions and cultural norms of the American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities. These experiences leave AI/AN children feeling stripped of their identity, contributing to the generational trauma Native Americans have been experiencing since Europeans landed on American soil hundreds of years ago.

Hearing these stories encouraged me to start thinking more critically about how historical trauma impacts the mental health of future generations, and how SOAR providers can address generational trauma in their Medical Summary Reports (MSRs). We have a unique opportunity to bring in the context of trauma experienced first-hand and historically in the Personal History section of our MSRs. Information that disability examiners wouldn't have access to without the use of the SOAR model. SOAR is about accessing benefits, but at its core, SOAR serves as an avenue for people to be heard and understood.

When we can communicate the core causes of mental health symptoms and the effects experienced by the folks we serve, we can give them a voice."

See How SOAR Works**SOAR Success in New Jersey**

The following SOAR success story was submitted by Kimberley Sunchuk, a SOAR-trained practitioner from Bridgeway Behavioral Health Services in Jersey City, New Jersey.

I had been providing case management services to John* who had recently been incarcerated, was experiencing homelessness, and was diagnosed with a serious mental illness. At the time, returning to work was something that he was unable to do.

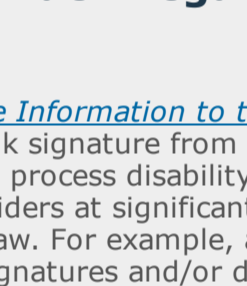
Using the SOAR model made working with John much easier. Using my agency for John's mailing address ensured that he had a safe place to receive important documents. Submission of the SSA-1696 allowed me to communicate with SSA and DDS about the application and this helped move the process along more smoothly.

My SAMHSA SOAR TA Center Liaison, Pam Heine, was also very responsive and helpful. She quickly answered my questions or directed me to someone who could assist me. This was my first time using the SOAR model so this one-on-one guidance was very helpful. I was also able to attend a workshop with other SOAR practitioners and discuss using the model and how to address barriers and challenges as they presented themselves. It was a very positive experience, and I would recommend that anyone new to SOAR utilize the resources available through the SOAR TA Center or their local SOAR Initiative. I would also add that the SOAR model may seem like a lot of information to take in all at once, but the more you use the model the easier it will get!

John was approved for both SSI and SSDI benefits. He was able to secure a hotel room to stay in while being linked to a permanent and stable residence and is now able to pay rent for his own place. With his basic needs met, he is more focused on his recovery and engaged in treatment. He has experienced an improvement in his mental health symptoms and has a more positive outlook on other goals that he had placed on hold – he is considering returning to college so that he can obtain employment.

Have a story of your own? [Submit your SOAR success!](#)

Sharing Our Successes stories are edited for brevity and clarity. All beneficiary names have been changed to protect anonymity.

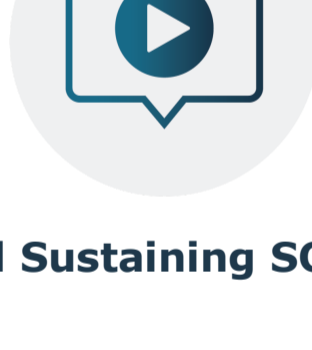
**SOAR Tip: An Important Reminder Regarding Submission of Form SSA-827**

When completing the [Authorization to Disclose Information to the Social Security Administration \(Form SSA-827\)](#), please remember to obtain an original ink signature from the applicant or their guardian. This is required by the Social Security Administration (SSA) to process disability claims. Altering the signature or date in any way violates SSA policy and puts medical providers at significant risk of releasing sensitive medical information without the proper authorization required by law. For example, avoid providing SSA-827 forms in the Electronic Folder that have altered applicant signatures and/or dates, such as displaying a picture of a signature or date that is not original. Forms altered with annotations are invalid and may cause case processing delays. For more information on completing the SSA-827 form, please visit [Collecting Medical Evidence: Completing Form SSA-827](#).

Upcoming Events**National SOAR Online Course Review Sessions**

~ These sessions are intended for SOAR-trained practitioners! ~

The SAMHSA SOAR TA Center will be hosting two SOAR Online Course Review Sessions in June. We will review key concepts from the *Child Curriculum* on June 7 and the *Adult Curriculum* on June 14. Both trainings will be held from 2pm-5pm ET. These events are open to those who have **passed** the SOAR Online Course and invitations will be emailed to those eligible.

**SOAR Webinar: Building and Sustaining SOAR Relationships with SSA and DDS**

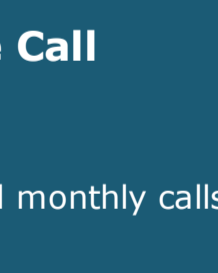
May 9, 2023, 3:00pm-4:30pm ET

This webinar will spotlight SOAR providers who have formed strong working relationships with their local, area, and regional SSA and DDS offices. The presenters will discuss how these relationships operate and how they developed strong partnerships through good communication. Attendees will also hear from a SOAR beneficiary who will share how these relationships and clear communication with SSA and DDS improved the application process for them.

Tools developed by the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center will be shared to assist with building and sustaining these critical relationships.

This webinar will be helpful to SOAR providers who are looking for examples of how to begin outreach with and gain buy-in from their SSA/DDS points of contact and to leadership at SSA/DDS who want to learn more about the SOAR model.

[Register for the Webinar](#)

**SOARing Over Lunch Conference Call**

May 16, 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.](#)

Federal Updates**Helpful Handouts from SSA**

These informational flyers provide a quick look at the Social Security Administration's (SSA) benefits, programs, and services. Please share with your community members and partners.

[Supplemental Security Income and Other Benefits: Information for People with Limited Earnings](#)

[How to Get Help from Social Security](#)

Partner Updates**HHRC Orientation Guide**

The [Homeless and Housing Resource Center \(HHRC\)](#) has developed an *Orientation Guide* to assist providers in onboarding new professionals by providing a compilation of introductory resources for new hires to review in the first three months of employment. Substance Use, Serious Mental Illness, Achieving and Maintaining Housing, and Treatment Models and Engagement are topics included in the guide.

[Access the HHRC Orientation Guide](#)

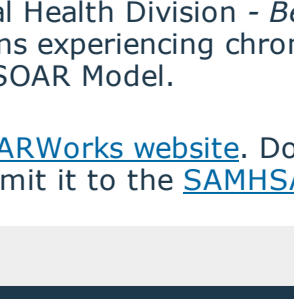
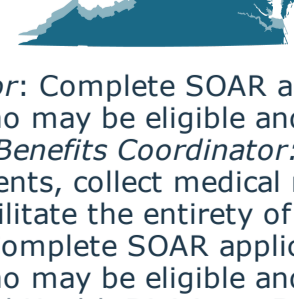
For additional resources, see [Hiring and Supervising SOAR Caseworkers](#).

HHRC Webinar: Introduction to Psychotic Disorders

This 90-minute webinar aims to provide education and introduce several skills and techniques for working with individuals experiencing symptoms of psychosis. The first half of the webinar will utilize a presentation format with the overarching aim to improve provider confidence in working with this population. The second half of the webinar will feature a panel discussion of best practices.

Please direct questions or concerns about HHRC training events to: info@hhrcrtraining.org

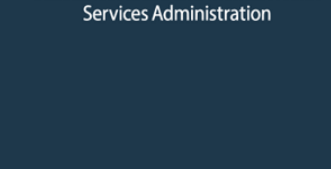
[Register for the HHRC Webinar](#)

SOAR Jobs

- **Florida:** SMA Healthcare - *SOAR Processor*: Complete SOAR applications and provide specialized training, advocacy, and assistance to consumers who may be eligible and wish to apply for SSI/SSDI benefits.
- **Pennsylvania:** Pittsburgh Mercy - *SOAR Benefits Coordinator*: Assist eligible adults apply for SSI and SSDI benefits. Conduct interviews and assessments, collect medical records, author detailed medical summary reports, and partner with SSA/DDS to facilitate the entirety of the SSI/SSDI application process.
- **Texas:** Integral Care - *SOAR Specialist*: 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:** City of Virginia Beach Behavioral Health Division - *Behavioral Health Clinician II/PATH SOAR*: 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!](#)

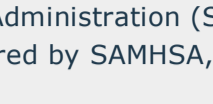
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The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) Technical Assistance (TA) Center is sponsored by SAMHSA, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

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