

SOAR Webinar: Peer Support Specialists: A Critical Component for SOAR Programs

Panelist Bios

Sametra Polkah-Toe, LMHC, NYCPS is a Project Associate for the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center. Prior to joining PRA, she was a lead supervisor for establishing Home and Community Based services for individuals experiencing mental health and/or substance use disorders and as a Rehabilitation Practitioner where she was responsible for providing recovery-oriented services to individuals of SPMI population. It was in this role where she first became introduced to SOAR and proudly served as a SOAR trained case manager and SOAR local lead helping to raise the approval rates and number of SOAR trained case managers in the five counties she served. In addition to her professional human service experience, she is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor in NYS and identifies as “an individual with lived experience.” Sametra earned a dual B.A in Applied Sociology from Buffalo State College and her M.A. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from Medaille College.

Sean Wright is a Certified Peer Counselor currently working as the Director of Community Outreach for Capital Recovery Center in Olympia WA. Sean has been working as a peer since 2015, starting with working in the inpatient care system before moving into crisis support, Sean has developed a great deal of experience working within the behavioral health system. Sean has seen firsthand the transformative power of SOAR as implemented by peers who can provide deep insight into the process and is currently working with Certified Peer Counselor Sara Smith to develop a devoted program staffed by peers to provide SOAR services as well as integrating SOAR into other services provided by Capital Recovery Center. In his personal life, Sean enjoys cooking and spending time with his partner and their 2 dogs."

Tanisha Murdaugh is a Certified Recovery Peer Specialist currently working as a Care Navigator with Broward House in Ft Lauderdale. She identifies as an Afro-Latina woman, and mother of one. She is currently the only SOAR representative and enjoys venturing into other departments to give a helping hand and learn new things. She loves to help others because she likes giving back. “So many others have helped me reach my goals and now it’s time for me to return the energy.” She is honored to be a panelist on this webinar and looks forward to continuing to help our clients reach their goals.

Sara Smith is the SOAR Representative and Outreach Specialist with the Capital Recovery Center. She received her Peer Counselor Certification in November of 2020. She started outreach and peer counseling/navigation in the summer of 2020 with an organization called Sidewalk. She then moved into working with AmeriCorps assisting with those that are incarcerated, as well as helping those that were job searching through WorkSource.

Meta Hogan is the Homeless Outreach Stabilization and Transition Program Manager for the Washington Healthcare Authority. She has twenty years of experience working with unhoused folks as an outreach worker, shelter manager, supervisor, and program director. She briefly served as the SOAR Lead for her region and has supervised numerous peers — some of them certified — in a variety of roles. She lives in Centralia, Washington, with her beloved and too many animals.

William Wall, PhD, CRPS is a former English professor whose life was interrupted by severe mental health disorders. He was institutionalized for 7 months and released on Mental Health SSDI. Since then, he found a new purpose in life as a Forensic Peer Specialist. Having lived experience with the SOAR process, Dr. Wall brings a unique perspective to clients needing help with MH SSI/SSDI claims. He has been SOAR certified since 2013. Dr. Wall is a recipient of the Florida Alcohol & Drug Abuse Association Certified Recovery Support Specialist of the Year, the Florida Department of Children and Families Peer Specialist of the Year, and the National TASC Milton Abrams Award. He is past Chair of the Florida Statewide Forensic Peer Specialist Work Group and a member of the GAINS Community of Practice on Competency to Stand Trial/Competency Restoration. He is also a member of the Criminal Justice, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse Advisory Board for three of the six counties in the Florida 8th Judicial Circuit.

Veronica Delgado, CPSW, CHW, is a Certified Peer Support Specialist and Certified Community Healthcare Worker with Presbyterian Health Plan in Las Cruces, New Mexico. She assists members with their social determinant of health needs, to find community resources and identify the need for SOAR advocacy services for At-Risk and Homeless populations. Veronica believes, "Peer support allows members to be more open about their life experiences and accept assistance because they are engaged through a mutual process of support, shared understanding of specific lived experiences and they respond to working as "partners" to address their social and health needs. Many members improve their current situation after receiving SOAR advocacy services. I'm happy to be part of something that improves their quality of life."