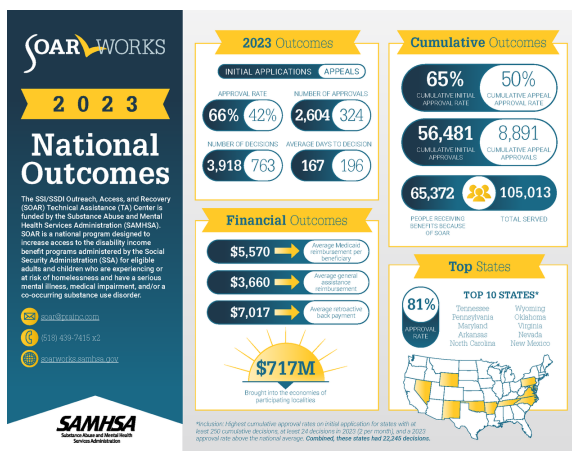


2023 SAMHSA SOAR NOVEMBER E-NEWS

2023 Outcomes are SOARing!

Over the last 18 years, the SOAR model has been used to assist over 105,013 people who were experiencing or at risk of homelessness with applications for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), the two disability income benefit programs administered by the Social Security Administration (SSA).

In FY2023, there were 2,604 approvals on initial applications. Decisions on SOAR-assisted initial applications were received in an average of **167 days** with an allowance rate of **66 percent**.



The 2023 SOAR Outcomes Issue Brief highlights SOAR Super Stars that have been increasing their capacity, improving approval rates, and reducing the days to decisions on SOAR-assisted SSI/SSDI applications. Read more about the success in New Mexico, the increased capacity in Missouri, the DEI integration in Washington, DC, and the sustained success in Hillsborough County, Florida. You can also review the complete tables with state outcomes at the initial and appeal levels.

Kudos to the SOAR community for helping those who need it most gain access to insurance and income support. Thank you for all that you do!

[Read more about our 2023 National Outcomes!](#)

SOAR State Team Lead Leadership Academy

On October 24 and 25, 2023, the SAMHSA SOAR Technical Assistance Center hosted 37 participants from 26 states and Washington, DC to the State Team Lead Leadership Academy in Charlotte, North Carolina. SOAR State Leaders from across the country were able to network with one another and receive updates and information from the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center and participate in discussions and roundtables to share best practices, plan for SOAR implementation and growth within their state, and grow their SOAR expertise and leadership. State leaders are ready to SOAR forward!



November Spotlight

National Homeless Youth Awareness Month

November was first declared as National Homeless Youth Awareness Month in 2007 and marks the month to acknowledge children and families experiencing homelessness. SOAR is a viable tool to address the needs of children and youth with disabling conditions that are experiencing homelessness.

In recognition of National Homeless Youth Awareness Month, the SOAR TA Center encourages you to review the resources available to assist SOAR efforts for community partners that work with youth and children, [Connecting Unaccompanied Youth Experiencing Homelessness to Social Security Disability Benefits and Steps to Completing a Child SSI Application Using the SOAR Model](#)

See How SOAR Works



Sharing Our Successes

SOAR Success in North Carolina

The following SOAR success story was submitted by Michelle Armstrong-Lavine, a SOAR-trained practitioner and SOAR Local Lead from Mecklenburg County CJS Forensic Evaluations Unit in Charlotte, North Carolina.

After serving eight and a half years in state prison, Will* was scheduled to be released on July 17, 2023. He was informed that he would be sent to Durham, North Carolina, rather than Charlotte, where he previously resided. Having no affiliation to or familiarity with Durham, this news sent Will into an immediate panic. He shared, "I didn't even know the name of one street in Durham, so I was wondering how I was going to survive there."

Plans changed in Will's favor, and he was instead referred to the Mecklenburg County Re-entry Program in Charlotte. He was immediately linked to a Re-entry case manager and reunited with his sister. The case manager reported that when he first met Will, he was "very distant, and skeptical about the Re-entry program" so he knew that he had to gain Will's trust by addressing his immediate needs. So, he linked Will to re-entry housing and referred him to the SOAR Program for assistance with applying for SSI/SSDI benefits.

The SOAR Coordinator collaborated with his case manager and sister to initiate the SSI/SSDI application process. She encountered a barrier when Will's sister shared that Will was listed as deceased in the Social Security system and she had no success with correcting the error. Fortunately, she was able to provide the documents needed to prove that Will was not deceased, and the issue was quickly resolved with the assistance of the Social Security SOAR liaison.

Will was awarded SSI benefits on September 29, 2023 - only 59 days after the application was submitted. He immediately began receiving \$914 monthly and received a retroactive payment for the month of August. This achievement was only possible due to the collaboration of the individuals who were invested in assessing and addressing Will's immediate needs.

Will now independently pays for his housing and is working with his case manager and the Coordinated Entry Program to secure housing that is more medically appropriate. He also has Medicaid and is receiving the medical treatment that he needs. During his recent presentation at the SOAR State Team Leadership Academy, Will shared that the greatest benefit of working with the Re-Entry and SOAR Programs was that he "got his freedom back." He also expressed his gratitude to all the SOAR case managers and other professionals that support individuals who are released from incarceration. He said his hope is "to be able to give back one day."

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: Understanding SSA's Sequential Evaluation Process

In this [video](#), SOAR Senior Project Associate and OAT Administrator, Suzy Sodergren explains how the Social Security Administration uses the Sequential Evaluation, SSA's standard, five-step process to ensure accurate disability determinations. The video illustrates the importance of providing complete information for SOAR-assisted applications to meet the SSA's requirements to be able to get approvals at the earliest opportunity at step 3 (the Listings). Step 3 is key to SOAR success!

Upcoming Events



SOARing Over Lunch Conference Call

[December 19, 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!](#)

In Case You Missed It

HHRC Webinar: Low-Barrier Shelter Models for People Who Use Drugs

This webinar, held on November 14, featured Camillus House (Miami, FL) and Beacon House (Philadelphia, PA) sharing information about their low-barrier shelter models for people who use drugs. Attendees learned about different models for providing low-barrier shelter access for people who use drugs and had the opportunity to hear from people about their own experiences staying in low-barrier shelter programs.

[View the Webinar Recording](#)



SOAR Webinar: Understanding the Steps to Completing SOAR-Assisted SSI/SSDI Applications

Be sure to view the recording of the October 17 webinar, *Understanding the Steps to Completing SOAR-assisted SSI/SSDI Applications*, to hear tips from SAMHSA SOAR TA Center staff on how to get started on your first SOAR-assisted SSI/SSDI application. Encourage your SOAR-trained colleagues to do the same so you can work together on submitting quality SOAR-assisted SSI/SSDI applications!

[View the Webinar Recording](#)

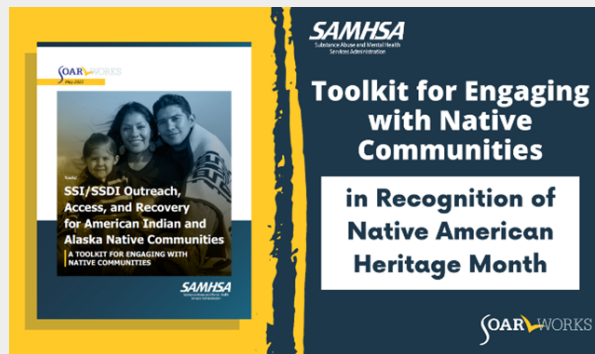
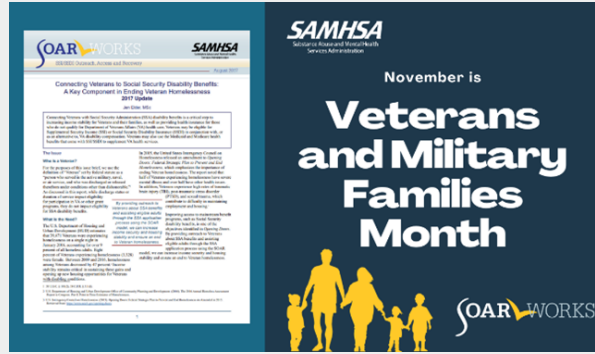
SOAR Jobs



- **Colorado:** Bayaud Enterprises - *Navigator II -Benefits Navigator (Full -time)*: Assist in SSI/SSDI benefit acquisition utilizing SOAR model principles.
- **Maryland:** Health Care for the Homeless – *Disability Assistance Outreach Specialist (Full-time)*: Submit SSI/SSDI applications using the SOAR model for severely, chronically mentally ill individuals who are experiencing homelessness in Baltimore City.
- **New Mexico:** Heading Home – *SOAR Specialist - Contractor (Part-time)*: Work on a contract basis as a SOAR Specialist using the SOAR model to assist clients experiencing or at risk of homelessness who are in need of disability benefits. As this is a semi-remote position, an ideal contractor can work under minimal supervision and is self-motivated.
- **Virginia:** Micah Ecumenical Ministries - *SOAR Coordinator*: This is a full-time position responsible to the Income Navigator. Most individuals served are enrolled in one of Micah’s housing programs. This position has a focus on submitting high-quality Social Security benefits applications using the SOAR model.

Learn more about these positions on the [SOARWorks website](#). Do you have a job posting you would like to

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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).

Disclaimer: The SAMHSA SOAR Technical Assistance Center is sending this eNews with support from SAMHSA, HHS. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official view of HHS or SAMHSA.

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