

SOAR Funding and Sustainability Overview

There is no dedicated source of funding for SOAR programs. As a result, difficulty obtaining funds to pay the salaries of SOAR benefits specialists is a major reason that SOAR services in some areas are severely limited or nonexistent. Despite these challenges, communities have been resourceful in securing funding from a variety of sources.

Federal and State Government

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

- [Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness \(PATH\)](#) funds provide outreach and supportive services for adults with serious mental illness or substance use disorders who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. PATH funds support dedicated SOAR benefits specialists, statewide leadership, and coordination in many states.
- [Olmstead Civil Rights Decision](#). In North Carolina, SOAR coordination is provided by the North Carolina Coalition to End Homelessness and funded by the state's Olmstead funding.
- [Treatment for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness \(TIEH\)](#) funds are being used to support SOAR work in Nashville, Tennessee, and fund four full-time SOAR benefits specialists in South Carolina.
- [Community Mental Health Services Block Grant \(MHBG\)](#) funds priority treatment and support services not covered by Medicaid, Medicare or private insurance for low-income individuals that demonstrate success in improving outcomes and/or supporting recovery. MHBG funds are being used for full-time and part-time positions in multiple states.
- [System of Care \(SOC\) Expansion and Sustainability Cooperative Agreements](#) are intended to improve behavioral health outcomes for children and youth with serious emotional disturbances and their families. The intensive care coordination that is present in many SOC-funded communities brings opportunity for SOAR implementation.
- [Certified Community Behavioral Health Centers \(CCBHC\)](#) provide a comprehensive range of mental health and substance use disorder services to vulnerable individuals. There are opportunities for SOAR provider organizations to receive a [CCBHC grant](#) or to partner as a [Designated Collaborating Organization \(DCO\)](#) with a CCBHC.

Medicaid

- [Medicaid](#) and the [Children's Health Insurance Program \(CHIP\)](#) are two federal-state programs that provide health insurance coverage to children, youth, and young adults in families with limited income.
- In most states, once an individual is approved for SSI and Medicaid, treatment providers can retroactively bill Medicaid for services provided up to 90 days prior to the SSI protective filing date. This results in reimbursement for previously uncompensated care as well as payment for ongoing treatment.
- Some states are participating in the Medicaid Administrative Claiming (MAC) program, which helps to defray the cost of certain administrative activities related to providing Medicaid services.

- Arizona has established a SOAR billing code for Medicaid. Caseworkers who work for Medicaid providers can bill directly for providing SOAR services.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

- [HUD Community Development Block Grant \(CDBG\)](#) is a flexible program that provides communities with resources to address unique community development needs and distributes annual grants on a formula basis to local governments and states. SOAR programs have used these funds to support dedicated benefits specialists.
- [HUD Continuum of Care \(CoC\) Program](#) and [Emergency Solutions Grant \(ESG\)](#) Funding. There is an opportunity for ESG recipients and CoCs to use some of this funding to support [dedicated SOAR case workers](#). The ESG Program Components of prevention, rapid rehousing (RRH), outreach, and emergency shelter all allow for case management that includes obtaining benefits. CoC Programs can integrate SOAR-trained elements into their program design to improve system performance measures of benefits acquisition and increased income.
- [HUD Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program \(YHDP\) Grants](#). SOAR is a key part of a systemic response to ending youth homelessness and represents an innovative model for increasing income and housing stability for youth who have disabling conditions, particularly for those exiting foster care. SOAR can be [integrated into plans](#) to end youth homelessness.

U.S. Department of the Treasury

- [Treasury Emergency Rental Assistance Program \(ERAP\)](#) At least 90 percent of both ERA1 and ERA2 funds must be used for direct financial assistance including rent, rental arrears, utilities and home energy costs, utilities and home energy costs arrears, and other expenses related to housing for households with one or more individuals that are at-risk of homelessness or housing instability. However, remaining funds are available for housing stability services, including case management and other services intended to keep households stably housed such as the use of SOAR-dedicated case workers to increase income supports.

AmeriCorps

- [AmeriCorps State and National](#) members can provide direct outreach, engagement, and assistance with SSI/SSDI applications using the SOAR process. State and community organizations can apply for a grant to support AmeriCorps State members through their governor-appointed State Service Commission.
- [AmeriCorps VISTA](#) members can identify potential SOAR collaborations, organize local SOAR planning meetings, fundraise for dedicated SOAR staff, collect data, and coordinate future trainings. State and community organizations can apply to sponsor an AmeriCorps VISTA member through their State Corporation for National and Community Service Office.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

- The [Supportive Services for Veteran Families \(SSVF\)](#) grant program promotes housing stability for low-income Veterans. Funds may be used to support dedicated SOAR benefits specialists and increase access to SSI/SSDI.
- Staff of VA Medical Centers are encouraged to complete SOAR applications.

State or County General Assistance (GA) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Incentives

For individuals with severe disabilities who cannot work, transitioning from GA or TANF to SSI/SSDI provides them with greater benefits and saves state funds. Programs in Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and Utah have documented savings to state programs and leveraged funding for SOAR programs.

- **GA funds** offer time-limited cash benefits to adults without dependents who have limited or no income. These benefits are not available in every state. Through an Interim Assistance Reimbursement (IAR) agreement, SSA can reimburse state or local public assistance funds when individuals begin receiving SSI/SSDI.
- **TANF** is a block grant from the Department of Health and Human Services for states to provide time-limited assistance to families with dependent children to help them become self-sufficient through employment. For parents who cannot meet the TANF work requirements, assessment of eligibility for SSI/SSDI may better meet their needs and save state funds for others in need.

State or Local Plans to End Homelessness

Plans to End Homelessness have funded SOAR leadership, coordination, and dedicated benefits specialists.

- In Nashville, Tennessee, the Mayor's office funds three dedicated benefits specialists through the city's 10-year Plan to End Homelessness.

Other Funding and Collaborations

Foundation and Other Private Funding

National and local companies and foundations fund SOAR coordination, training, and dedicated SOAR benefits specialists.

- Pharmaceutical and insurance companies: GlaxoSmithKline, Blue Cross Blue Shield, and Kaiser Permanente funded SOAR programs in North Carolina.
- Child-focused foundations include the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and Butler Family Fund.

Hospital Collaborations

Hospitals can benefit from SOAR collaborations by recouping payments for previously uncompensated care when individuals approved for SSI obtain Medicaid. SOAR providers may receive funding from hospitals for dedicated SOAR benefits specialists to help individuals access SSI/SSDI and health insurance.

- In 2023, states reported an average \$5,570 reimbursed from Medicaid per SOAR approval.
- In Atlanta, Georgia, First Step collaborated with Grady Memorial Hospital to help get individuals on SSI/SSDI and Medicaid/Medicare. First Step shared a percentage of the funds that Grady was able to recover from Medicaid for previously uncompensated care.

Legal System Collaborations

SOAR programs collaborate with jails and prisons through in-reach initiatives, reentry planning, and training corrections staff to complete SSI/SSDI applications. These efforts reduce recidivism and prevent incarceration through jail diversion, which in turn saves money for states and communities.

- The Miami-Dade Jail Diversion Program helps individuals apply for SSI/SSDI using SOAR while they are incarcerated. Documenting reductions in recidivism, they estimated a cost-savings to the state of \$7 million in 2009. These results helped leverage ongoing funding for their SOAR program.
- The primary goals of the juvenile justice system, in addition to maintaining public safety, are skill development, habilitation, rehabilitation, addressing treatment needs, and successful reintegration of youth into the community. Court Appointed Special Advocates may be well suited to assist children and youth with their SSI applications to help aid in the child's stability.

Child-Specific Partners

There are several collaborative partners in child services that could reallocate or dedicate funding to SOAR-initiatives. These providers have potential staff to be trained and are key stakeholders in the process.

- Family-run organizations can be an invaluable resource and partner for families who may need support in navigating the education, mental health, child welfare, and juvenile justice systems.
- The child welfare system has a continuum of services designed to ensure that children are safe and that families have the necessary support to successfully care for their children.
- School systems provide a wide array of educational programs, services, modifications, and accommodations to help students whose disability or disabilities affect their ability to learn. Two federal laws govern the provision of special education services: Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.