



SOAR Webinar Series: Strengthening SOAR Applications Through Strong Collaborations

The SOAR Process: How SSA in Trenton Supports Quality SOAR Applications



PRESENTED BY:

SAMHSA SOAR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER
POLICY RESEARCH ASSOCIATES, INC.

UNDER CONTRACT TO:

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Welcome!

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Disclaimer

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Webinar Instructions

- Muting
- Recording availability
- Downloading documents
- Evaluation
- Question instructions

Learning Objectives

- Learn how to negotiate an effective SOAR Process
- Learn how to begin and 'sustain' a strong relationship with your local SSA office through ongoing communication
- Gain a better understanding of how building relationships with your SSA district office leads to submitting quality SOAR applications

Agenda

How to Establish, Implement and Sustain a SOAR Process:

- David Vinokurov, District Manager, Social Security Administration, Trenton, New Jersey

Submitting Quality SOAR Applications:

- Diane Hirko, SOAR Coordinator and SOAR Local lead, Family Guidance Center, Hamilton, New Jersey

Questions & Answers

- Facilitated by SOAR TA Center Staff

How to Establish, Implement and Sustain a SOAR Process: Trenton Makes, the World Takes!

David Vinokurov, District Manager, Social Security Administration,
Trenton, New Jersey



Trenton SSA Commitment to SOAR

Background

- In early 2009, Trenton SSA District Office (DO), Mercer Alliance to End Homelessness, along with other local, State and Federal agencies, began working towards a goal to end homelessness in Mercer County, NJ.
- In order to achieve this goal, a Mercer County SOAR Steering Committee was created.
- Representatives on this committee were heads or their designees of these agencies, giving the committee the ability to make important decisions and apply valuable resources where needed.



Trenton SSA Commitment to SOAR

Challenges:

- There are distinct issues related to serving persons experiencing homelessness, e.g.)
 - Contact information can be difficult to obtain,
 - Applicant may require assistance gathering information, and
 - Completing applications
- Mercer County SOAR Project/ SSA initiative was designed to conduct outreach and application assistance to persons experiencing chronic homelessness



Collaboration Begins with Communication

Established Goals:

- Locate homeless who are potentially qualified for benefits.
- Facilitate an efficient disability and retirement claims process via the SOAR process

Action Plan:

- Outreach to the following:
 - Hospitals
 - Soup Kitchens
 - Homeless Shelters



Collaboration Begins with Communication

Outreach Action Plan:

- Attend all of the following events:
- **Project Homeless Connect (PHC)**
- Events are generally single day, “one-stop” events in conjunction with other federal and local agencies.
- Homeless individuals can receive information on housing and other available benefits, and
- SSA staff assists with claims leads, appeals, SS-5 applications, and provide programmatic information.



Collaboration Begins with Communication

Veterans Stand Down

- Stand-Downs are one part of the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) efforts to provide services to homeless Veterans.
- Typically one to three day events providing services to homeless Veterans such as food, shelter, clothing, health screenings, VA and Social Security benefits counseling
- Referrals to a variety of other necessary services, such as housing, employment, and substance abuse treatment.
- Collaborative events, coordinated among local VAs, other government agencies, and community agencies who serve the homeless.



Collaboration Begins with Communication

Outreach Action Plan:

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- **Project Homeless Connect (PHC)**
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Collaboration Sustained via Ongoing Communication

Central Point of Contacts established:

- SOAR Case Worker is a liaison for problems and issues
- SSA Lead Person – Management, DDS, and Claims Specialist
- We have ongoing constant daily/weekly communication
- Allows all parties to stay focused on completing applications or providing medical records



Collaboration Sustained with Ongoing Communication

Hospital Collaboration

- Reached out to each of the local hospitals' medical record directors
- Explained the SOAR Project for homeless or general assistance clients
- Asked the hospitals to participate in Mercer County's SOAR project
- Hospitals agreed to provide records free of charge



Collaboration Sustained via Ongoing Communication

Multi-Provider Release and Procedures

- Adapted partnering hospital's release form as a template to meet HIPAA requirements
- Provider names are at top -- client circles all the hospitals or agencies they used
- Created handbook with medical records procedures for each facility



Collaboration Sustained via Ongoing Communication

Interagency Collaboration

- Created request form to share client names among Mercer County SOAR caseworkers
- Prevents duplication of applications
- Provides information about clients using more than one agency



New Jersey SOAR Process

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- The statewide SOAR Process was adapted from a 'workflow plan' put in place between the Trenton SSA DO and the Mercer County SOAR Community.
 - We find that the workflow may be adapted to meet the needs of local SSA Field Offices.
 - Questions on adapting the workflow are addressed to the SSA Area Office and Regional Offices.



New Jersey SOAR Process

- The paper claim package should be delivered (hand/USPS/UPS/FedEx) at the time the iClaim portion of the package is submitted
- After receipt of the claim package, the local FO enters the SSA-8000 in SSA systems along with all other forms submitted via paper. All iClaim forms submitted will be imported from the internet into SSA systems
- The local SSA FO will contact the SOAR provider to clarify any missing, unclear, or incomplete information



New Jersey SOAR Process

- The local SSA FO will contact the SOAR provider to clarify any missing, unclear, or incomplete information
- SSA will mail the claim receipt to the provider who has submitted the SSA-1696
- SSA will place the appropriate electronic “HOMELESS” flag on the case and will enter “SOAR” in the remarks section of the flag before transferring the claim to DDS.
- Decisions will be processed using current SSA policy and procedures



Determining Status and Setting Protective Filing

- Provider will have potential applicant complete and sign a “SOAR Project Consent for Release of Information” form
- Provider will have potential applicant sign SSA-3288 “Consent for Release of Information” and SSA-1696 “Appointment of Representative” forms
- Provider will fax the two signed consent forms to the local SSA Field Office (FO) contact



Determining Status and Setting Protective Filing

- Local FO will identify the applicant's SSA claim status and complete information on the "*SOAR Project Consent for Release of Information*".
- FO faxes SOAR consent back to provider within 5 business days
- If there is no pending claim the FO will treat the *Consent* as intent to file a claim and establish the protective filing date.
- FO faxes SOAR Consent back to provider within 5 business days which serves as receipt for establishment of protective filing



Potential Applicant has a Pre-Existing Appointed Representative

- Local FO will identify the applicant's SSA claim status and complete information on the "SOAR Project Consent for Release of Information".
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The SSA Application Process

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- Establishment of the Protective Filing Date provides a maximum of 60 days for the SOAR provider to complete the application and deliver to SSA.
 - Applications should be completed as soon as possible before the expiration of the 60 days.



The SSA Application Process

- All Providers will assist applicants with applying for both Social Security Disability (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI).
- Provider will submit application for SSDI online and complete an application for SSI via a paper SSA-8000 “Application for Supplemental Security Income”.
- If Provider is unable to complete application for SSDI online, paper applications may be submitted.



The SSA Application Process Online Submission

On-line Application Process:

- The Internet Social Security Claim (iClaim) which is the online SSDI application
- The iClaim is only complete when the applicant is present to click and sign
- Providers may assist applicants with the completion of the iClaim but the applicant must electronically sign it.



The SSA Application Process: Online Submission

On-line Application Process:

- The iClaim is the on-line form that needs to be submitted as part of a SOAR application.
- Remarks should be entered onto the iClaim indicating that this is a SOAR claim. This will enable the local FO to associate the iClaim with any paper documentation that will be provided.



The SSA Application Process Online Submission cont.

- The Internet Disability Report (IDR), i3368
- The i3368 is submitted at the same time as the iClaim
- All SOAR providers must list on the i3368 the staff person assisting the applicant, address, and contact information as a source for medical records



The SSA Application process: Online Submission cont.

- Form SSA-827 “Authorization to Disclose Information to the Social Security Administration”
- The SSA-827 authorizes SSA to obtain medical information from the medical sources provided on the i3368
- When the applicant completes the i3368 process they may agree to sign the SSA-827 electronically when clicking on the “SUBMIT” button at the end of the i3368
- If the applicant opts out of the electronic authorization process with the i3368 a paper SSA-827 with a pen and ink signature/date/witness signature must be submitted
- The electronic SSA-827 authorization process may only be used with applicants who are age 18 or older and who are filing on his or her own behalf. In all other cases a paper SSA-827 must be submitted



The SSA Application Process: Completed

Paper Documents:

- Completed SOAR checklist
- Completed SSA-8000 (2/2010 version) “Application for Supplemental Security Income (SSI)”
- Any supporting documentation for the SSI application. Inquiries from the SOAR Provider regarding questions on the SSI application should be addressed to the local FO as soon as possible



The SSA Application Process: Completed

- Printed/signed/witnessed SSA-827 “SSA Release of Information” if electronic SSA-827 authorization process was not used in conjunction with the i3368
- If applicant is HIV+, the SSA-4814 “Physician Report on Adult with Allegation of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) Infection” form



The SSA Application Process: Completed cont.

- SSA-3373 “Function Report-Adult” form (*NJ: This form is unnecessary only if the individual is homeless AND the Provider is submitting a SOAR recommended Medical Summary Report that incorporates functional information per the SOAR training)
- SSA-8510 “Authorization for the Social Security Administration to Obtain Personal Information” form that enables SSA to obtain any additional information that may be needed.



The SSA Application process: Completed cont.

SSA-1696 “Appointment of Representative” form

- Write SOAR at the end of the appointed rep’s name so that both SSA and DDS can identify the claim as a SOAR claim.
- If SOAR provider is unable to complete the SSDI iClaim application and i3368 online, a paper SSA-16 and SSA-3368 must be submitted to the FO



The SSA Application process: On to DDS...

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- After submission of the online documents and paper documents to SSA, the claim will be transferred to the jurisdictional DDS
 - The DDS Adjudicator will contact the SOAR Provider listed on the i3368 and provide the applicant's bar-coded cover sheet to the Provider for submission of records through either Electronic Records Express (ERE) or fax



The SSA Application Process: On to DDS

- If the SOAR provider has not heard from DDS within 10 days of submission of the SOAR application, the Provider will call the DDS Call Center for the appropriate DDS (contact the local FO for more information) to find out the name of the assigned adjudicator.
- The SOAR Provider will use the bar coded cover sheet to transfer records directly to the electronic folder at DDS via fax OR upload them through the ERE process.



The SSA Application Process: On to DDS

SOAR Provider will submit:

- Any medical records from his/her own agency
- Any medical records that Provider collect from other agencies or medical providers
- Any collateral or other relevant information
- The written and co-signed medical summary report in accordance with the SOAR training and process. This report should include any clarifying or additional information that is confusing or missing from records



Ongoing Follow-Up!

- SOAR provider will request status on pending cases from the local FO as needed via the pre-determined method, with the understanding that a medical decision may take upwards of 120 days.
- SOAR Provider will contact the DDS claims adjudicator early in the process to identify himself/herself and offer assistance

Submitting Quality SOAR Applications: “With a Little Help from My SSA Friends”

Diane Hirko, SOAR Coordinator and SOAR Local Lead, Family Guidance Center, Hamilton, New Jersey

Family Guidance Center: Best Practice Tips

- SSA Trenton Field Office is paramount to success!!
- Knowing Your Adjudicator and Claims Representative
- What medical evidence will your adjudicator require for various impairments?
- How much information does your adjudicator need in the letter of support?
- What should be provided to secure re-openings of prior filings?
- What will your claims representative require to process the claim?



Family Guidance Center: Best Practice Tips

- Maintaining Communication Among SOAR Partners
- Is the process running smoothly between the SSA claims representative and the disability adjudicator?
- Is the advocate maintaining effective communication with the adjudicator and claims representative?
- Remaining available to trouble-shoot as issues arise.



Family Guidance Center

- FGS receives SOAR referrals from various partners in our Mercer County SOAR Collaboration, e.g.:
 - Board of Social Services
 - Rescue Mission
 - Soup Kitchen
 - Reentry programs such as Volunteers of America
 - Local hospital
 - Medical/mental health providers
 - CEAS Center (Coordinated Entry and Assessment Services)



Family Guidance Center

- Providers in our Mercer County SOAR coalition provide on-site, easy access to increase the number of kept appointments and to engage individuals where they are most comfortable.
- The critical step in the Mercer County SOAR process is the completion and utilization of SSA-3288 as often the SOAR candidate cannot remember if they ever filed before, cannot remember when they last worked, could not identify place of birth or parent's names, and so on.

Family Guidance Center

- Some counties and states fax their SSA-3288 to their local field office and are provided feedback within 5 business days.
- In Mercer County, the SSA-3288 is faxed to the field office, immediately a telephone call is placed to the field office, and immediate feedback is provided. In example:
 - Past history of applications, awards, denials, appeals history, verification of social security number and other names used (helpful with medical records), verification of DOB, parent's names, and place of birth (critical for replacing birth certificate, thus critical for housing), verification of date last insured (critical for SSDI claims)

Family Guidance Center

- The SSA-3288 is a wonderful guide on how to proceed with every SOAR candidate, and it is also very useful in providing key elements for the replacement of identification necessary for immediate county benefits and possibly emergency housing.
- Key to SSA and SOAR Communication!





Key to SSA and SOAR Initial Communication!

Social Security Administration
Consent for Release of Information

Form Approved Highlight Existing Field
OMB No. 0960-0566

You must complete all required fields. We will not honor your request unless all required fields are completed. (**signifies a required field*).

TO: Social Security Administration

***My Full Name**

***My Date of Birth
(MM/DD/YYYY)**

***My Social Security Number**

I authorize the Social Security Administration to release information or records about me to:

***NAME OF PERSON OR ORGANIZATION:**

***ADDRESS OF PERSON OR ORGANIZATION:**

***I want this information released because:**

We may charge a fee to release information for non-program purposes.



Family Guidance Center & SSA

- Even after the application is sent to DDS, someone in the SSA Trenton Field Office staff (DEDICATED SOAR TEAM) are always available to answer any question and to look anything up, any day of the week.
- SSA also provides a weekly telephone appointment to gather in-depth information such as adjudicator name, number, and supervisor, and where the application is in the process.
- Mercer County SOAR also has access to the DDS Senior Manager



Questions and Answers

Facilitated By:

SAMHSA SOAR Technical Assistance Center

Policy Research Associates, Inc.

- *Please type your question into the Q&A panel located underneath the participant tab, or*
- To ask a question by phone, please raise your hand by clicking the hand icon in the participant pod. We will unmute you so you can ask your question.

For More Information on SOAR

<http://soarworks.prainc.com>

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