

SSI/SSDI OUTREACH, ACCESS, AND RECOVERY: AN OVERVIEW



THE ISSUE

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) are disability income benefits administered by the Social Security Administration (SSA) that also provide Medicaid and/or Medicare health insurance to eligible children and adults. The application process for SSI/SSDI is complicated and difficult to navigate. Nationally, about 30 percent of adults who apply for these benefits are approved on initial application and appeals take an average of 1 year to complete.

For people who are experiencing or at-risk of homelessness or who are returning to the community from institutions (jails, prisons, or hospitals), access to these programs can be extremely challenging. Approval on initial application for people who are experiencing or at-risk of homelessness and who have no one to assist them is about **10-15 percent**. For those who have a serious mental illness, substance use issues, or co-occurring disorders that impair cognition, the application process is even more difficult – yet accessing these benefits is often a critical first step in building resiliency and supporting recovery.

A SOLUTION

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) developed the SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) model to address this critical need. SOAR-trained case workers submit complete and quality applications that are approved quickly. By maximizing income supports through benefits access and employment support, individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness can achieve housing stability. The SAMHSA SOAR TA Center provides a three-step approach to SOAR implementation:

STRATEGIC PLANNING



Strategic planning meetings bring key state/local community partners (e.g., SSA and Disability Determination Services (DDS); State Mental Health Agency and Department of Corrections leadership; and community homeless, health, behavioral health providers, youth, family, and adult peer representatives) together to **collaborate and agree** upon a SOAR process for the submission and processing of adult SSI/SSDI and child SSI applications and **develop** an action plan to implement their SOAR program.

TRAINING LEADERS



Training of case workers using the **SOAR Online Course: Adult and Child Curricula**. These free, web-based courses include the development of a practice case using a fictional applicant. A **Leadership Academy** program creates strong local leaders to support SOAR-trained case workers and coordinate local SOAR programs.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE



Individualized technical assistance for supporting **action plan implementation**, identifying funding opportunities for **sustainability**, developing **quality review** procedures, and assisting with **tracking outcomes** to document success and identify areas for improvement and expansion.

OUTCOMES



Since 2006, over **65,372** people are receiving benefits because of SOAR.



The 2023 approval rate on initial SOAR-assisted applications averages **66 percent** in **167 days**.



In 2023 alone, SSI/SSDI brought at least **\$717 million** into the economies of the participating localities.