VA Releases SSVF SOAR Toolkit!

The Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF Program) is pleased to announce the release of the SSVF SOAR Toolkit. Connecting Veterans with Social Security Administration (SSA) disability benefits is a critical step to increasing income stability for Veterans and their families, particularly for those Veterans whose work activity is limited by disabling conditions. SOAR directly contributes to the SSVF’s goal of promoting housing stability among very low-income Veteran families by increasing access to critical income supports. SSVF grantees are encouraged to utilize the resources in this toolkit to expand use of the SOAR model so that any Veteran with disabling conditions who is experiencing or at risk for homelessness is able to quickly connect with a SOAR provider for SSI/SSDI application assistance. It is the SSVF Program Office’s expectation that all grantees utilize SOAR through either direct provision, a subcontract relationship, or through a specific Memorandum of Understanding that clearly outlines referral processes and expectations across partners.

The SSVF SOAR Toolkit is available on the SSVF website.

Discontinuation of the SOAR Consent Form

As we noted in April, the SOAR TA Center temporarily discontinued use of the SOAR Consent for Release of Information Form (SOAR Consent) while reviewing its compliance with SSA’s privacy guidelines. During this interim, communities worked hard to implement new methods of communicating with SSA and DDS about SOAR-assisted claims, setting protective filing dates, and assisting individuals in establishing “my Social Security” accounts to check on the status of pending claims.
Upon further review of the SOAR Consent during this interim period, the SOAR TA Center has decided to permanently discontinue its use as a method of gathering information on prior or pending claims and setting protective filing dates. Instead, we encourage SOAR practitioners to review our previously recommended guidelines on using SSA-approved processes to assist applicants in these areas. If you have any questions or would like guidance on how this works in your community, we encourage you to reach out to your SOAR State Lead or SOAR TA Center Liaison.

Sharing Our Successes

Florida

Cindy Swartz from the Jail Diversion Program (JDP) at the Eleventh Judicial Criminal Mental Health Project shared two success stories of clients Jenny* and Arnold*:

Jenny

“You guys kept believing in me even when I didn’t believe in myself.” Jenny was homeless, uninsured, and not receiving proper medical or psychiatric care when she was referred to JDP in March 2015. She received treatment from several agencies in Miami and was also successfully assisted with an application for SSA benefits from the SOAR Entitlement Unit. Jenny is very grateful for the help she received, and in August 2016 her court case was dismissed. She returned home to Texas to reunite with her family. Jenny gave birth to a beautiful baby girl in November 2016. Today, she remains stable, sober, healthy, and happy to embark on the journey of motherhood with the support of her family.

Arnold

Upon enrollment in JDP in 2015, Arnold reported a long history of homelessness—living on the streets, homeless shelters, and eventually in prison. He described psychiatric symptoms that went untreated for decades. “If it wasn’t for JDP taking a chance on me, I would not be here; I would still be in that cell. JDP inspires and motives me, they have shown me that I am not just a number in the system, I am somebody.”

Through the combined effort of Jackson’s Psychosocial Rehabilitation Program (PSR), Trauma Resolution Center (TRC), Camillus House, and the SOAR team, Arnold successfully completed JDP in 2016 and his cases were dismissed. Today, Arnold receives outpatient services, works as a prep-cook/dishwasher, and lives independently. “This is my first job in my whole entire life and I have signed my first lease. All of this wouldn’t be possible without JDP. Sometimes, a lot of times, I have to pinch myself. I do not want to give anyone the idea that the battle is over; this battle continues, it is every day.”

New York

New York will be holding a state-specific Leadership Academy, September 12-14, 2017 in Albany, New York. The New York State Leadership Academy is being sponsored by the Office of Temporary Disability Assistance and will be a great opportunity to develop local SOAR leadership throughout the state!

Texas
Austin Local Lead, **Suzie Brady**, was recently featured in a Housing First Oak Springs blog! Read the excerpt here:

"Through Suzie's leadership and Integral Care's commitment to SOAR, we are seeing a new level of excitement and interest in SOAR. Most importantly, however, this is translating into tangible benefits for the individuals being served. To date, the Integral Care dedicated SOAR specialists have helped **55 individuals** apply for benefits using the SOAR process. This has resulted in **36 approvals** and there are **14 additional applications pending a decision.**" Congratulations Suzie and be sure to read the full article!

Suzie also shared some shout-outs to members of her team:

"I would [like to] give a huge congratulations to Integral Care’s Social Work interns, **Josh Kivlovitz** and **Brelynn Thomas**, through the University of Texas at Austin Social Work—they each completed their internships and each had two SOAR approvals!

Also, we would like to thank **Tess Bernhard**, an AmeriCorps member working for **Trinity Center** in Austin, who just got word of her first SOAR approval. She has done some amazing work with individuals experiencing homelessness in Austin, and we will miss her as she ends her AmeriCorps service with us!"

*Name changed to protect client anonymity.*

Do you have a success story you’d like to share with the SOAR community? E-mail it to soar@prainc.com!

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**Events**

**SOARing Over Lunch Conference Calls**

*Tuesday, August 15, 2017; 1:00 p.m. ET*

The next SOARing Over Lunch Conference Call will take place Tuesday, August 15 at 1:00 p.m. ET! The SOAR TA Center hosts a series of informal monthly calls designed to help support SOAR efforts across the country. Participants can log-in to ask about any SOAR-related question they may have.

**Webinar Recap: SOAR Webinar on SSA/DDS Collaborations**

On this webinar, held on Thursday, July 20, the SOAR TA Center walked participants through two new, fantastic tools to help SOAR programs enhance collaborations with SSA and DDS. The presentation slides, webinar recording, and supplementary materials are available for download!

**Save the Date: SOAR Webinar on SOAR Applications and Opioid Use Disorders this October**

This October, the SOAR TA Center will host a webinar on using the SOAR model with clients who have opioid use disorders. More information, including registration details, will be shared soon.
Federal Updates

No Change for Social Security Combined Trust Fund Reserves Depletion Year Says Board of Trustees, Disability Fund Improves by Five Years

The Social Security Board of Trustees released its annual report on the long-term financial status of the Social Security Trust Funds. The combined asset reserves of the Old-Age and Survivors Insurance, and Disability Insurance Trust Funds are projected to become depleted in 2034, the same as projected last year, with 77 percent of benefits payable at that time. The DI Trust Fund will become depleted in 2028, extended from last year’s estimate of 2023, with 93 percent of benefits still payable.


Military Veterans bring experience and skills of great value to the workforce. This new publication from SSA describes services that help Veterans with a disability enter the workforce and find fulfilling employment. Some of the services are open only to Veterans, but many of them are available to any American with a disability.

Social Security Announces New Online Service for Replacement Social Security Cards in Indiana

SSA introduced the expansion of online services for residents of Indiana available through its my Social Security portal. Nancy A. Berryhill, Acting Commissioner of Social Security, announced that residents of Indiana can use the portal for many replacement Social Security
number (SSN) card requests. This will allow people to replace their SSN card from the comfort of their home or office, without the need to travel to a Social Security office. For more information about this service, visit SSA's New or Replacement Social Security Number and Card page.

**Early Childhood Homelessness in the United States: 50-State Profile**


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**Funding Corner**

Looking for some new tools to help support your SOAR initiative? Check out these articles and tools, handpicked by SOAR Liaison Matt Canuteson!

- [Foundation Center Fundraising Courses](#)
- Foundation Center webinars:
  - [Introduction to Corporate Giving](#)
  - [Introduction to Finding Grants](#)
  - [Introduction to Fundraising Planning](#)
  - [Introduction to Project Budgets](#)
  - [Introduction to Proposal Writing](#)
- [Crowdfunding and Nonprofits](National Council of Nonprofits)
- [A Network Approach to Capacity Building](National Council of Nonprofits)