SOAR this Recovery Month

Every September, we honor National Recovery Month to increase awareness and understanding of mental and substance use disorders and celebrate people who recover. The theme of this year’s Recovery Month is Join the Voices for Recovery: Invest in Health, Home, Purpose, and Community. The 2018 theme explores how integrated care, a strong community, sense of purpose, and leadership contribute to effective treatments that sustain the recovery of people with mental and substance use disorders.

Income stability through disability benefits and employment is one step on the path to recovery and a critical part of comprehensive, person-centered, integrated care. Community collaborations around income, housing, and healthcare, as well as the strong leadership of SOAR State and Local Leads are excellent examples of how SOAR supports recovery.

To highlight National Recovery Month, we are excited to share a new video with the SOAR community that looks at one man’s journey to recovery using the SOAR model and strong local collaborations. In this video, you’ll meet SOAR TA Liaison Abigail Kirkman, who worked with a client of Interfaith Partnership for the Homeless (IPH), Russell. Russell, Abigail, Kristen Giroux (IPH Assistant Director), and Brenda White (IPH Housing Case Manager) will walk you through Russell’s life before disability income benefits, his SSI application process, his housing placement, and his life today, which includes volunteer work at an antiques store. Russell’s story is one of many that demonstrates the power of SOAR and recovery.
What’s In Your SOAR Toolbox: Recovery Month Edition

In recognition of September’s National Recovery Month, the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center has assembled the following resources from the SOAR Library:

- **SOAR Employment Conversation Guide**: The SOAR Employment Conversation Guide is a tool that can help caseworkers begin important conversations about work with SSI/SSDI beneficiaries and those applying for benefits.
- **Housing Access and Stability with SOAR**: This issue brief, developed by the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center, looks at the integration of the SOAR model into Housing First programs.
- **SOAR Success Stories**: This issue brief highlights stories that were submitted to the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center in response to a call for examples of how Social Security disability benefits have changed the lives of people who were experiencing or at risk for homelessness.
- **Medicaid and Medicare: An Overview**: This article provides an overview of the health insurance programs associated with both of SSA’s disability programs.

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Sharing Our Successes

**SOAR Supports Transition-Age Youth in Indianapolis**

Autumn Lowry from Horizon House in Indianapolis, Indiana wrote in to share this touching SOAR success story:
“One of our partner agencies referred Sean* to me after doing an employment screening and finding that he would have significant difficulty working. This client was a youth who had been dropped off at a shelter when he turned 18. The client had a severely traumatic childhood. His diagnoses when I met him were childhood diagnoses. He was lashing out for help, expressing suicidal and homicidal ideations, and was all alone in a city 3 hours away from any sort of family.

The SOAR model allowed us to gather and interpret his medical and mental health history (I read all of the records I collect), which provided much-needed information in order to get this client the proper diagnosis and medication. I took him to medical appointments, shared his trauma and medical history with his new providers, and opened up communication between several agencies that were trying to meet this youth’s needs. SOAR put me in a position to serve as Sean’s medical advocate.

Sean’s initial application was denied, however, during the period between filing the request for reconsideration we were able to get the client into a group home/safe haven, got him approved for a Bureau of Developmental Disabilities Services waiver, and had him reevaluated to update his diagnoses and medication. I was able to provide all of this new information in his appeal, which was approved in 41 days! He now has housing, appropriate mental health treatment, and his own income, and can begin to work through his traumatic childhood, heal, and move into adulthood.”

Thank you for sharing this incredible success, Autumn!

**A Caseworker and a Veteran Take a Chance on SOAR**

Paula Renee Witcher of the Veterans Multi-Service Center, which serves Delaware, southern New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, wrote in to share about a recent SOAR success:

"My client is a Veteran who had been sleeping in his truck for 3 years. He had two attorneys who worked on disability benefit applications for him, but each submission was denied. He ended his relationship with his attorney and I was able to use the SOAR model to complete his appeal. My client had no income, and I was able to get him into emergency housing, where I worked on his appeal and was able to get him General Assistance. Once he was placed in the emergency shelter, he was able to apply for his VA benefits, which he was awarded. His income through these benefits was not enough to move into his own housing, but he was eventually able to access a housing voucher. During this time, we worked on his appeal and a new claim. In less than 3 months, my client was approved for his SSA benefits, and he is very grateful for the time that I took to work on his case. He is now in permanent housing and has the income to sustain his housing and enjoy life. Using the SOAR model was intriguing and exciting. It was very different but provided me with a more in-depth understanding of my client’s background.”

Congratulations, Paula! We are so excited to hear about your SOAR success!

*Please note, SOAR Success Story submissions have been edited for space and clarity. Beneficiary names have been changed to protect their anonymity.*

[Submit Your SOAR Success]
SOAR Job Postings

Connecticut
New Reach is hiring a full-time SOAR Benefit Specialist based in New Haven, Connecticut. The successful candidate will assist eligible women in applying for SSI/SSDI using the SOAR model.

Georgia
Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities is hiring a full-time Medicaid Eligibility Specialist based in Chatham/Savannah, Georgia. The successful candidate will help people with behavioral health disorders attain healthier lives by developing successful applications for Social Security Administration benefits.

Learn more about these postings on the SOARWorks website. Do you have a job posting you would like to share with the SOAR community? Submit it to the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center!

Events

SOARing Over Lunch Conference Calls
September 19, 2018; 1:00 p.m. ET

The next SOARing Over Lunch Conference Call will take place September 19 at 1:00 p.m. ET! The SAMHSA SOAR TA Center hosts this series of informal monthly calls designed to help support SOAR efforts across the country. Participants can join to ask about any SOAR-related question they may have.

Add SOARing Over Lunch to Your Calendar

Recent Stories from the SOAR Voices Blog

Community Makes the Difference
Professional Development Reflection: Housing First Partners Conference
COHHIO Housing Ohio Conference
Federal Updates

Updates to the SSA-16: SSDI Application
For those who use the paper version of the SSA-16: SSDI Application as a worksheet prior to completing the Online Disability Application, SSA recently updated the form. There was a new question added related to allegations of blindness or visual impairment, which replaced a question about obtaining permission to speak with past employers. The updated SSA-16 is available for use now.

New Compassionate Allowances Added
On August 20, SSA announced five new Compassionate Allowance conditions: Fibrolamellar Cancer, Megacystis Microcolon Intestinal Hypoperistalsis Syndrome (MMIHS), Megalencephaly Capillary Malformation Syndrome (MCAP), Superficial Siderosis of the Central Nervous System, and Tetrasomy 18p. Compassionate Allowances is a program to quickly identify medical conditions and serious diseases that meet Social Security’s standards for disability benefits. The full list of 233 Compassionate Allowance conditions is available on SSA’s website.

Partner Updates

September 12, 2018; 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. ET

This webinar will explore the myths, realities, and best practices related to treating justice-involved populations and also provide access to supplemental information on LGBT, transition-age youth, co-occurring disorders, and Veterans who are justice-involved.

The webinar will be moderated by Dr. Debra Pinals of the University of Michigan and Dr. Marvin Swartz of Duke University School of Medicine and will feature prerecorded interviews.
with national experts and special guests on best practices for treating justice-involved people.

Participants will have access to report briefs on treating justice-involved LGBT, co-occurring disorders, transition-age youth, and Veteran populations following the webinar.

Register Today

The SOAR TA Center is sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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