



## Kicking off the 10<sup>th</sup> Year of the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center

The SAMHSA SOAR TA Center is entering its 10<sup>th</sup> year of service! We have SOARed to new heights in Fiscal Year 2018 through new collaborations, new programs, and thousands of people who have been helped through the SOAR model. All of this success is due to the work of you—our incredible SOAR community. We look forward to SOARing with you in Fiscal Year 2019!

## SOAR WORKS ACCOMPLISHMENTS FISCAL YEAR 2018

The SAMHSA SOAR TA Center just celebrated its 9th year of service and is preparing for its 10th! It has been a great year and we want to thank you, the SOAR community, for helping us achieve these milestones! We look forward to SOARing with you in Fiscal Year 2019.



Practice Case  
Reviews



Online Course  
Graduates



OAT Users



Onsite Technical  
Assistance Visits



Listserv  
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**October is National Disability Employment Awareness**

# Month

Organized by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), we honor National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) each October. NDEAM celebrates the contributions of workers with disabilities and provides education about the value of a workforce inclusive of their skills and talents. DOL has a [number of helpful resources](#) to organize your own disability employment awareness event. We also encourage you to use [employment resources](#) from the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center, such as the [SOAR Employment Conversation Guide](#), to help start conversations about working while receiving SSA disability benefits.

[Let us know](#) how you helped spread awareness in your community!

**SOAR WORKS**  
**YES, YOU CAN WORK!**

Interested in returning to work or trying out work for the first time, but unsure how work will impact your Social Security benefits or if work is even possible for you?

Many people receiving disability benefits, or applying for benefits, really want to work, but face the consequences. This handbook will give you the information you and your family need to learn more about programs, which will assist you with returning to work, or trying out work for the first time!

We can help you find success! These recommended resources provide information on where you can go for assistance to learn more about employment for people with disabilities. Quality services are available to help you better understand all of the federal work incentive programs, including Social Security work supports for people with disabilities.

**MYTHS WE'VE HEARD ON THE STREETS AND FACTS TO BUST THEM UP!**

MYTH	FACT
"People with mental illness shouldn't work."	People with mental health conditions are just as productive as other employees. Employers who hire people with mental health conditions report good attendance and punctuality as well as motivation, good work, and job tenure on par with or greater than other employees.
"I will lose my disability benefits, income and health insurance, when I have worked so hard to obtain"	Not so fast! SSA offers comprehensive work incentives which allows you to keep your benefits for quite a long time. Should you be unable to continue working as a result of your disability, SSA may restart your benefits. Because some SSA rules may be hard to understand, all states have benefit planning resources to help you get started. <a href="https://www.ssa.gov/redbook/">https://www.ssa.gov/redbook/</a>
"I have never worked before, so I have no skills an employer needs"	People with disabilities with little or no work history do find work that meets their strengths, preferences, abilities, and skills. Supported employment services focus on these factors to help you seek and find competitive employment in the community.
"My family does not want me to work because they fear my symptoms will get worse."	Recent studies found that employees actually improves symptoms! Work offers less social isolation and a sense of purpose, just to name two benefits! Work is more than just a paycheck, and that includes other helpful resources for your family and friends to be supportive and understanding of your career goals.

Yes, You Can Work! Conversation Starter

**SOAR WORKS** **SAMHSA**

**Employment Conversation Guide**

**Purpose of the Guide**

- To begin conversations about work with SOAR beneficiaries and those applying for benefits.
- To ensure that the individual is receiving accurate information about employment and returning to work.
- To engage with an individual and determine their work goals.

EMPLOYMENT CONVERSATION GUIDE	
Name: _____	
Let's talk about work. (Add fact/positive statements about work)	
Questions to Ask	Responses
Why do you want to work? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>What triggered your interest in work?</li></ul>	
What kind of work do you want to do? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>How did you decide on that type of job?</li></ul>	
What do you feel are benefits to working? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>How long have you been out of work?</li></ul>	
How has your work affected you emotionally, financially, socially? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>When you first began to think about work, did you talk to anyone about that?<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>What did they say?</li></ul></li></ul>	
How do friends/family feel about you returning to work? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Have others encouraged or discouraged you from working?</li></ul>	

SOAR Employment Conversation Guide

**SOAR WORKS**  
**SOAR Enhances Recovery by Providing a Pathway to Employment**

**Work is a Critical Step in the Recovery Process**

Working is a critical step in recovery for people with serious mental illness.

- 66% of people with serious mental illness want to work.
- Only 15% of people with serious mental illness are working.
- Competitive employment through Individual Placement and Support (IPS) leads to increased income, improved self-esteem, increased quality of life, and reduced symptoms.
- Approximately 40% of clients who obtain a job with help from IPS assume steady work and remain consistently employed.

**Benefits and Employment Integration Increases Housing Stability**

Obtaining income supports through an integration of benefits and employment increases housing stability for people with serious mental illness. Careful benefit planning while utilizing IPS work incentives help increase income while maintaining benefits. How can?

SOAR Employment Resources	SOAR and IPS Integration Pilot	SOAR Employment Outcomes
SAMHSA SOAR TA Center employment resources for case workers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Social Security</li><li>• Medicare</li><li>• Medicaid</li><li>• Housing</li></ul>	Through the integration Pilot, programs offered case service assessments for both the SOAR and IPS model: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1 year pilot</li><li>• 10 sites engaged in pilot</li><li>• 71% of clients chose to enroll in both services!</li></ul>	Based on outcomes reported in the SOAR Online Evaluation Tracking System: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clients had an average earnings of \$200/month while applying</li><li>• Clients had an average earnings of \$275/month post approval</li></ul>

**SOAR Links Disability Benefits to Employment, Enhancing Outcomes**

Individuals with comprehensive integrated work with applying for and receiving Social Security Disability benefits, job training and benefits planning are essential elements of community effects.

Encourage Work From the Start	Integrate Services Whenever Possible	Utilize Social Security Work Incentives
Engagement Conversation (Job) (https://bit.ly/2ZU2G6S)	Results from the SOAR and IPS Integration Pilot (https://bit.ly/2ZU2G6S)	"No, No, No, Can We Not?" (https://bit.ly/2ZU2G6S) and SOAR and Employment Issue Brief (https://bit.ly/2ZU2G6S)

SOAR Enhances Recovery by Providing a Pathway to Employment

## SOAR Success

### Springfield, Missouri Veteran Returns Home at Last

By Holly Butler, SSVF Intake Specialist/ SOAR Specialist, The Kitchen, Inc., Home At Last in Springfield, Missouri

We will call our client, "John" for confidentiality purposes. John is a Marine Veteran who served for 5 years and received an honorable discharge. John came to [Home at Last](#) in March 2017 but did not qualify for our services based on his housing status. In April 2017, he was evicted from his home, which left him on the streets. John was now homeless and had no one to help him or give him shelter. He posted about his situation on Reddit and was referred to Home at Last.

When he first came to Home at Last, he was experiencing financial issues, mental health problems, and physical conditions that prevented him from working any type of job. His anxiety was extremely severe, to the point that he could not be out in a public setting for a long period of time. This is when he reached out to Home at Last's intake and received assistance on his SOAR application. John began the application process with me in March 2018 and was in approved June 2018.

I remember John was sitting in his case manager's office when I walked in, and he was so happy to tell me that he received a call saying that he was approved for SSI. He would receive back pay and have an income next month. That was the first time I had seen him smile so big that eyes lit up. He told me that he did not know how to thank us enough because now he was able to provide for himself and maybe pay off some bills. I have to say

that his smile is what got to me and made me think, 'this is why I come to work every day, and this is why I help people apply for SOAR'. One application changed his life and helped him maintain housing stability and improve his well-being.

*\*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!

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## SOAR Job Postings

### California

**Tarzana Treatment Centers, Inc.** is hiring a full-time Benefits Specialist based in **Reseda, California**. The successful candidate will assist individuals experiencing homelessness in creating claims for various streams of government benefits, including disability, using the SOAR model.

### Connecticut

**New Reach** is hiring a full-time SOAR Benefit Specialist based in **Bridgeport, Connecticut**. The successful candidate will be responsible for engaging individuals and families who are homeless in the SOAR process. The SOAR Benefit Specialist is also responsible for becoming a SOAR Local Lead.

**New Reach** is hiring a full-time SOAR Benefit Specialist based in **New Haven, Connecticut**. The successful candidate will assist women who are affected by homelessness as well as who present with co-occurring disorders in applying for SSI/SSDI using the SOAR model as well as other needed entitlement mainstream benefits.

### Kansas

**Wyandot Center** is looking for a full-time, dedicated SOAR Case Manager based in **Kansas City, Kansas**. The successful candidate will meet with applicants and complete SSI/SSDI applications using the SOAR process.

### Maryland

**The Maryland Benefits Counseling Network** is hiring a full-time, contractual Benefits Case Manager based in **Baltimore, Maryland**. The successful candidate will be SOAR trained and will have experience dealing with Social Security entitlements to work within two of Maryland State Psychiatric Hospitals.

### Michigan

**MPHI** is hiring a SOAR Specialist based in **Lansing, Michigan**. The successful candidate will be responsible for statewide coordination and implementation of Michigan's SOAR Initiative.

### Washington, DC

**Miriam's Kitchen** is hiring a SOAR Advocacy Case Manager based in **Washington, DC**. The successful candidate will collaborate with individuals to complete SSI/SSDI applications using the SOAR process.

**Pathways to Housing DC** is hiring a full-time SOAR Outreach Benefits Specialist based in **Washington, DC**. The successful candidate will provide direct outreach services and high-quality application assistance to individuals applying for disability benefits, using the essential SOAR components.

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](#)!

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## Events



### **SOAR: A Reentry Tool for Individuals Involved in the Criminal Justice System**

*October 24, 2018; 3:00-4:30 p.m. ET*

A new webinar, *SOAR: A Reentry Tool for Individuals Involved in the Criminal Justice System* will be presented by the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center in partnership with SAMHSA's GAINS Center. We will explore how SOAR implementation in criminal justice settings can be a strong reentry tool to increase housing stability and promote post-release success.

On this webinar, you will learn:

- Key strategies for introducing SOAR to and engaging with criminal justice systems
- SOAR best practices for assisting SSI/SSDI applicants who are involved in the criminal justice system

[Register for the Webinar](#)

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## Federal Updates

### **VA Highlights SOAR at Jesse Brown VA Medical Center**

In a new [series of white papers](#) on promising practices for ending Veteran homelessness, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently highlighted [successful SOAR partnerships](#) at Jesse Brown VA Medical Center (VAMC) in Chicago, Illinois. The paper details how HUD-VASH staff are collaborating with treatment teams within the VAMC and their local SSA office to

efficiently assist Veterans with SSI/SSDI applications. Kudos to the Jesse Brown VAMC team for their great SOAR work and VA recognition!

Interested in strengthening partnerships with your local VAMC? Contact your [SAMHSA SOAR TA Center Liaison](#) to learn more!

## [VA Achieves Historic Goal by Delivering 81,000 Appeals Decisions to Veterans in Fiscal Year 2018](#)

On September 14, 2 weeks ahead of schedule, VA exceeded its goal to deliver 81,000 appeals decisions of disability benefits and services to Veterans in Fiscal Year 2018 – 28,000 more decisions than the previous year. In doing so, VA’s Board of Veterans’ Appeals provided thousands of Veterans with critical, life-changing decisions.



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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