

## SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) and Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH)

PATH and SOAR are two key programs administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) that work together to end homelessness. Both programs serve adults who have serious mental illnesses and/or co-occurring substance use disorders who are experiencing or at risk for homelessness and assist them in gaining income and housing stability.

### What is the SOAR model?

SOAR is a national program designed to increase access to Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) for eligible adults who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and have a mental illness, medical impairment, and/or a co-occurring substance use disorder.

- Since SOAR began in 2006, over 34,919 people who were experiencing or at risk of homelessness were approved on their initial application using the SOAR model
- In 2017, SOAR-trained providers across the country maintained an average approval rate of 64% for initial applications in an average of 96 days from application date to decision

### What is the PATH Program?

PATH is a formula grant to the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. There are nearly 600 local organizations that provide PATH services.

- The PATH program's objective is to connect individuals to mental health services and stable housing
- This objective is more easily accomplished when people who are homeless have access to the income and health insurance that comes with Social Security benefits

### Working in Partnership since 2006

PATH and SOAR programs have been working in partnership to increase access to SSA disability benefits and end homelessness for over 11 years<sup>1</sup>. The program goals directly complement each other, as SOAR provides PATH case managers the tools necessary to expedite access to income and health benefits, resulting in improved housing and treatment outcomes.

All fifty states report collaboration with the PATH program including:

- Dedicated benefits specialists on PATH teams
- SOAR training for PATH outreach and case management staff
- PATH outreach staff serve as local SOAR coordinators and leaders
- Fifteen SOAR State Team Leads are also the State PATH Contacts

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<sup>1</sup> "PATH and SOAR: An Effective Partnership." The SAMHSA SOAR TA Center. November 2010.

[http://soarworks.prainc.com/sites/soarworks.prainc.com/files/PATH\\_and\\_SOAR.pdf](http://soarworks.prainc.com/sites/soarworks.prainc.com/files/PATH_and_SOAR.pdf)

## Using PATH funds for SOAR Leadership and Coordination

### Maryland

Maryland uses PATH funding to support a statewide SOAR Director, two county SOAR leads, two full time dedicated SOAR benefits specialists, and one part time benefits specialist

- The State SOAR Director played an integral role in expanding SOAR to every county in the state by creating local SOAR steering committees and strategic plans, and developing dedicated SOAR specialist positions
- The Director continues to monitor each county's SOAR process and outcomes to ensure quality, and supports dedicated SOAR local leads
- PATH funding has been critical to Maryland's success in serving over 1270 individuals using SOAR, with an 85 percent overall approval rate on initial applications

### Tennessee

In Tennessee, the State PATH Contact serves as the SOAR State Team Lead and utilizes PATH funds to support SOAR Regional Coordinators throughout the state.

- Regional Coordinators help train PATH teams and other providers in the SOAR model, develop relationships with medical providers, review applications for quality, and collect outcomes
- This effort began in Nashville where SOAR programs have served 1057 individuals with a 98 percent approval rate on initial applications
- Regional Coordinators helped spread SOAR to surrounding regions, resulting in an additional 489 approvals for SSA benefits on initial application

## Using PATH funds for Dedicated SOAR Benefits Specialists

### North Carolina

In North Carolina, PATH funding is used to support six dedicated SOAR benefits specialist positions.

- These specialists work in 5 different communities across the state
- Joined by 21 other full-time and 5 part-time dedicated SOAR caseworkers in the state, North Carolina has served 1789 individuals with an 81 percent approval rate on initial application

### Michigan

In Michigan, each of the 20 Intended Use Plans that are approved for grantees requires that each case manager complete at least 8 SOAR assisted SSI/SSDI applications for PATH consumers each year.

- The annual Request for Applications (RFA) also encourages programs to allocate a full or half-time position on the PATH team solely dedicated to completing SOAR and other benefit applications, which a few grantees have done
- PATH providers submit over half of the SOAR assisted applications in Michigan

## Building new SOAR and PATH Partnerships

We encourage states and communities to continue to strengthen the partnership between SOAR and PATH. For more information on using SOAR in your PATH program, contact the SAMHSA SOAR Technical Assistance Center at [SOAR@prainc.com](mailto:SOAR@prainc.com) or visit <http://soarworks.prainc.com>