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 individuals. The application process for SSI/SSDI is complicated and difficult to navigate. Nationally, about 28 percent of individuals who apply for these benefits are approved on initial application and appeals take an average of over 1.5 years 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 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 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 managers submit complete and quality applications that are approved quickly. The SOAR TA Center provides a three-step approach to SOAR implementation:

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

TRAINING LEADERS
Training of case managers using the SOAR Online Course. This free, web-based course includes the development of a practice case using a fictional applicant. A Leadership Academy program creates strong local leaders to support SOAR-trained case managers 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 34,919 initial SOAR SSI/SSDI applications have been approved.
The 2017 approval rate on initial SOAR applications averages 64 percent in 96 days.
In 2017 alone, SSI/SSDI brought at least $356 million into the economies of the participating localities.

For more information, e-mail us at soar@prainc.com or visit https://soarworks.prainc.com/