



SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery (SOAR) helps states and communities increase access to Social Security disability benefits for people with disabilities who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the SOAR Technical Assistance Center develops and provides training and technical assistance to support the implementation of the SOAR approach.

Since 2006, the SOAR approach has been used to assist more than 29,000 people who were experiencing or at risk for homelessness with applications for Social Security disability programs—Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).

Of the applications assisted using SOAR, 65 percent, representing 19,000 persons have been approved for SSI/SSDI upon initial application since SOAR began (Table 1).¹ This compares to an estimated approval rate of 10–15 percent for persons who are homeless who do not receive assistance to apply. For all persons aged 18–64 who apply for SSA disability benefits, the allowance rate on initial application is 29 percent.² Decisions on SOAR initial applications were received in an average of 100 days in 2013, an increase of only two days over the previous year.

An additional 3,000 persons, whose applications were denied initially, were approved on reconsideration or appeal (Table 2). Taken together, since 2006, the SOAR approach is responsible for assisting 22,100 persons who were experiencing or at risk of homelessness to access Social Security disability benefits. In 2013 alone, SSI/SSDI for the individuals served by SOAR brought an estimated \$188 million into the economies of participating states and localities. States report that through SOAR they are

- **Serving individuals who are chronically homeless.** Based on data from 33 states, the individuals served had been homeless for an average of 17 months.
- **Increasing access to housing.** Sixteen states report that, on average, 65 percent of applicants for SSI/SSDI were housed within an average of 59 days.

SOAR Critical Components Make a Difference

Although the approval rate across all states averages 65 percent, there is a wide variation and many states are achieving significantly higher approval rates. Looking only at states that have served more than 100 persons in Table 1, seven states (Arkansas, Kansas, Maryland, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Washington) have an average approval rate of 87 percent. In comparison, the eight states with the lowest approval rates have an average approval

rate of 53 percent. While the states with the lowest approval rates are serving nearly twice as many people as the states with the highest approval rates (1,188 versus 645 persons per state on average), they may also be spending more time and resources on appeals than other states.

States with higher approval rates cite their capacity for implementing SOAR's critical components³ and their attention to submission of high quality applications. Paying attention to SOAR critical components has other benefits as well:

- **Better communication with SSA and DDS.** Based on data from 39 states, 69 percent of applications were submitted using the SSA-1696 Appointment of Representative Form as recommended by SOAR.
- **Fewer consultative exams.** Only 26 percent of applications reported in SOAR's Online Application Tracking (OAT) system required a consultative examination.

Sustainability

Fifteen states report that they secured new or sustained funding for their SOAR programs, including

- Four states created a total of 11 new full-time SOAR positions and two half-time SOAR positions
- The New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness received a \$10,000 grant from the Albuquerque Community Foundation to continue SOAR.
- The Ohio Coalition on Homelessness and Housing received a two-year grant to continue their SOAR partnership with the Ohio Office of Medicaid HOME Choice program.
- The Mental Health Association of Rhode Island received funds from the Rhode Island Foundation to continue SOAR and add a case manager to expand SOAR services to Washington County.

Collaborations

SOAR emphasizes the importance of collaboration with other agencies and across systems including, for example,

¹ The SOAR TA Center requests voluntary submission of SOAR outcomes from states annually from July 1 through June 30 of each year. Unless otherwise noted, these are the data reported in this issue brief.

² SSI Annual Statistical Report, 2012. SSA Pub. No. 13-11827. Washington, DC: SSA, July 2013

³ <http://soarworks.prainc.com/article/soar-model-key-components>

Table 1. 2013 SOAR Assisted Initial Application Outcomes

State	Locality	Years of Data	Cumulative Decisions	Cumulative Approvals	Approval rate (%)	Average Days to Decision
Alabama	Birmingham	5	103	76	74	110
Alaska	Anchorage	5	74	55	74	NA
Arizona	Phoenix	3	112	60	54	128
Arkansas	Multiple sites	5	466	372	80	67
California	Monterey	<1	2	0	0	195
	Sacramento	3	1324	707	53	58
	Santa Barbara	2	4	4	100	NA
	Santa Clara	3	75	67	89	NA
	San Diego	2	22	14	64	NA
	Kern	<1	2	2	1	50
Ventura	2	97	60	62	143	
Colorado	State	4	411	266	65	99
Connecticut	State	4	129	89	69	94
Delaware	State	5	293	212	72	60
DC	District	3	35	31	89	122
Florida	State	6	2663	1755	66	75
Georgia	State	5	1943	1064	55	140
Hawaii	State	2	24	20	83	168
Idaho	State	2	78	39	50	90
Illinois	State	3	95	66	69	85
Indiana	Multiple sites	5	20	18	90	NA
Iowa	State	3	39	30	77	193
Kansas	State	4	508	407	80	113
Kentucky	State	6	652	441	68	133
Louisiana	Multiple sites	4	154	76	49	71
Maine	State	2	5	5	100	80
Maryland	Multiple sites	4	360	308	86	70
Massachusetts	State	4	462	267	58	NA
Michigan	State	5	1949	1164	60	86
Minnesota	State	6	1789	1234	69	123
Mississippi	Multiple sites	3	20	8	40	103
Missouri	Multiple sites	3	37	24	65	91
Montana	Multiple sites	2	88	33	38	77
Nebraska	Multiple sites	5	540	306	57	57
Nevada	Reno, Las Vegas	5	257	180	70	90
New Hampshire	Nashua	2	7	6	86	100
New Jersey	Multiple sites	5	284	161	57	107
New Mexico	State	5	291	183	63	113
New York	State	8	827	565	68	80
North Carolina	State	7	813	653	80	85
Ohio	State	5	2846	1488	52	NA
Oklahoma	State	6	582	407	70	NA
Oregon	Multiple sites	4	182	92	51	NA
	Portland	6	845	674	80	92
Pennsylvania	Multiple sites	4	85	52	61	50
	Philadelphia	6	1185	1180	100	36
Rhode Island	State	6	200	154	77	62
South Carolina	Multiple sites	3	54	34	63	93
South Dakota	Rapid City	2	71	63	89	NA
Tennessee	Nashville	7	522	508	97	40
	Multiple sites	6	344	263	76	75
Texas	State	5	305	206	68	135
Utah	State	6	3160	1600	51	209
Virginia	State	6	667	476	71	143
Washington	Multiple sites	2	31	12	39	103
	Veterans project	2	200	190	95	96
West Virginia	Multiple sites	5	34	22	65	45
Wisconsin	State	4	694	485	70	101
Wyoming	State	3	101	75	74	106
TOTAL			29,162	19,008	65%	100 Days

hospitals, corrections, Veteran service providers, and employment services, as well as SSA and the Disability Determination Service (DDS). Below are some of the many collaborations that make SOAR an important partner in efforts to address homelessness nationwide.

Continuum of Care. SOAR is increasingly important in the plans and activities of HUD’s Continuum of Care (CoC) Program. For the third consecutive year, the SOAR Technical Assistance Center is accepting applications from CoCs that have not yet participated in the federally sponsored SOAR Technical Assistance Program. Ten CoCs received SOAR technical assistance in 2012, ten more in 2013 and five additional CoCs are expected to be added in 2014.

Veterans. SOAR worked closely with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as state and local Veteran initiatives to ensure that Veterans eligible for SSA benefits were able to apply. Thirty-one states reported assisting Veterans with SSI/SSDI applications and more than 100 SSVF (Supportive Services for Veteran Families) program grantees report using SOAR as part of their outreach to Veterans.

PATH. All 50 states report collaborations between SOAR and SAMHSA’s Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) program. These collaborations include

- Dedicated benefits specialists on PATH teams
- SOAR training for PATH outreach and case management staff

Table 2. 2013 SOAR-Assisted Appeals Outcomes

State	Locality	Years of Data	Cumulative Appeals Decisions	Cumulative Appeals Approvals	Appeals Allowance Rate (%)	2013 Average Days to Decision
Alabama	Birmingham	3	3	3	100	110
Alaska	Anchorage	2	10	4	40	116
Arizona	Phoenix	3	48	28	58	60
Arkansas	State	3	73	29	40	83
California	Multiple sites	1-2	100	79	79	NA
Colorado	Multiple sites	4	64	57	89	182
Connecticut	State	2	20	14	70	98
District of Columbia	District	3	25	15	60	101
Florida	Multiple sites	4	220	119	54	78
Georgia	First Step	3	432	146	34	100
Hawaii	Honolulu	1	1	1	100	369
Idaho	State	2	24	9	38	90
Illinois	State	2	12	10	83	NA
Iowa	Des Moines	3	22	11	50	85
Kansas	State	4	85	58	68	61
Kentucky	Multiple sites	4	184	113	61	71
Louisiana	Shreveport	3	79	45	57	NA
Maryland	Multiple sites	4	117	87	74	99
Michigan	State	4	629	426	68	NA
Minnesota	State	3	346	310	90	NA
Mississippi	Gulf Coast	2	5	1	20	NA
Missouri	Kansas City	3	10	9	90	720
Montana	Billings	2	37	16	43	NA
Nebraska	Multiple sites	4	234	106	45	68
Nevada	Las Vegas	3	115	91	79	200
New Jersey	Multiple sites	4	100	60	60	253
New Mexico	State	3	37	14	38	104
New York	NYC	3	9	3	33	NA
North Carolina	State	4	254	198	78	NA
Oregon	Portland	4	266	145	55	175
Rhode Island	State	3	167	103	62	71
South Carolina	State	2	22	12	55	100
Tennessee	Multiple sites	3	11	6	55	92
Texas	Multiple sites	1	13	6	46	120
Utah	State	3	1,585	497	31	405
Virginia	State	4	108	63	58	140
West Virginia	Multiple sites	2	69	15	22	45
Wisconsin	Multiple sites	3	198	118	60	109
Wyoming	State	2	5	3	60	184
Total			5,852	3,092	53%	266 Days

- State PATH contacts serve as SOAR coordinators and trainers

Employment. Nineteen states reported collaborations with employment and/or work incentive programs. Seven of these were new in 2013.

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and General Assistance programs.

Twenty-three states reported collaborations with TANF programs and/or general or public assistance programs.

Hospitals. Collaborations with hospitals were reported by 28 states for some or all of the following:

- Agreements with medical records departments for expedited records at no cost
- Easy access to needed assessments
- Dedicated benefits specialist positions within the hospital
- Grant funding to support local nonprofit SOAR programs
- Discharge planning in state hospitals

Corrections. Collaborations with corrections were reported by 19 states, including a jail diversion program in Miami, Florida, and a prison inreach program in Ossining, New York that reported a combined total of 127 decisions in an average of 36 days with an allowance rate of 86 percent in 2013. Other examples include

- Jail and prison inreach to assist with SSI/SSDI applications and pre-release planning
- Collaboration with parole and probation to coordinate post-release services
- Jail diversion programs
- SOAR training in state departments of corrections

Cost Savings

Once an individual is approved for SSI and Medicaid, treatment providers can retroactively bill Medicaid for services provided up to 90 days prior to the SSI protective filing date. This results in reimbursement for previously uncompensated care, as well as payment for ongoing treatment. In Table 3, eight states report \$1.9 million in Medicaid reimbursement, or an average of \$7,417 per person, as a result of SOAR.

Table 3. 2013 Medicaid Reimbursement

State	Locality	Total Reimbursed	Number of Persons	Reimbursement Per Person
Arkansas	State	\$8,964	15	\$598
California	Multiple sites	\$460,078 *	NA	NA
Florida	Lakeside	\$80,000	65	\$1,231
	Park Place	\$855,259	16	\$53,454
Ohio	State	\$150,543	44	\$3,421
Kansas	Bert Nash	\$37,372	12	\$3,114
	S. Central Mental Health	\$65,628	7	\$9,375
Nebraska	Northeastern	\$3,000	1	\$3,000
	Lincoln	\$70,000	1	\$70,000
New Jersey	Bergen Co.	\$7,651	3	\$2,550
North Carolina	Raleigh	\$61,131	17	\$3,596
	Wilmington	\$121,640	16	\$7,602
Total		\$1,921,266	197	\$7,417

* Number of applicants represented unavailable. This amount not considered when calculating the average reimbursement per person.

Some communities offer people who are disabled and have low incomes a monthly cash stipend to help cover essential living expenses while they apply for SSI. This general or interim assistance is provided while the SSI application is pending. Once approved, the state or county is reimbursed out of the individual’s SSI retroactive payments for the income provided (Table 4). Communities can then use these funds to help support others who need assistance or to fund SOAR efforts to transition people with disabilities from public assistance to SSI. Communities were reimbursed, on average, \$3,106 per person approved for SSI.

Table 4. 2013 General/Public Assistance Reimbursement

State	Locality	Total Reimbursed	Number of Persons	Reimbursement Per Person
Maryland	State	\$41,070	41	\$1,002
Minnesota	State	\$566,040	132	\$4,288
Nebraska	Lincoln	\$4,192	1	\$4,192
New Jersey	Bergen Co.	\$2,247	2	\$1,123
Ohio	State	\$675,360	239	\$2,826
Total		\$1,288,909	415	\$3,106

Hearings and Appeals

States increasingly are using the SOAR approach to assist with applications in the appeals process, both reconsiderations and hearings before an administrative law judge (ALJ). Since 2010, more than 3,000 or 53 percent of SOAR claimants have been approved at reconsideration or upon appeal at the ALJ level (Table 2). SOAR assisted appeals take an average of 266 days compared to the national average of approximately one year.⁴

For More Information

For more information about SOAR or the SOAR Technical Assistance Center, go to <http://soarworks.prainc.com> or email soar@prainc.com. Follow us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/soarworks> or on Twitter @soarworks.

⁴ http://www.ssa.gov/appeals/DataSets/01_NetState_Report.html