



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 individuals who are eligible. The application process for SSI/SSDI is complicated and difficult to navigate. Nationally, about 29 percent of individuals who apply for these benefits are approved on initial application and appeals take an average of *one year* to complete.

For people who are homeless 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 are homeless and who have no one to assist them is *about 10-15 percent*. For those who have a 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

SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery (SOAR) is an approach that helps states increase access to mainstream benefits for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness through:

- **Strategic Planning Meeting(s)** to establish collaboration among key state and/or local stakeholders and to develop an action plan for implementing the SOAR approach (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).
- **Training** of case managers using SAMHSA's *Stepping Stones to Recovery* curriculum that includes a step-by-step explanation of an improved SSI/SSDI application process. A Train-the-Trainer program allows for expansion and sustainability.
- **Technical Assistance** to states and communities including support for action plan implementation, training observations with feedback, and assistance with tracking outcomes in order to document success and help access additional resources.

Outcomes

- Since 2006, nearly 15,000 initial SSI/SSDI applications have been approved across 48 states.
- The allowance or approval rate on initial SOAR applications averages 66 percent in an average of 98 days (from date of application submission to date of decision).
- In 2012 alone, SSI/SSDI brought at least \$142 million into the state and local economies of the 48 states reporting outcomes.

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

SAMHSA SOAR Technical Assistance Center | Policy Research Associates, Inc.

345 Delaware Ave., Delmar, NY 12054 | p. 518.439.7415 | f. 518.439.7612

SOAR@prainc.com | <http://www.prainc.com>