



## **The Rhode Island Coalition to End Homelessness' SOAR FAQs**

### **What is SOAR?**

SOAR is a national project funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). It is designed to increase access to SSI/SSDI for eligible adults who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and have a mental illness and/or a co-occurring substance use disorder.

### **How is SOAR different from the usual application process for SSI/SSDI benefits?**

SOAR recognizes that the application process for SSI/SSDI benefits poses challenges for individuals who have a disability and are dealing with the crisis of homelessness. Caseworkers want to help, but are often overwhelmed with their own caseloads and work. Often, cases are trapped in an appeals process that can take up to two years. SOAR specialists are case managers who have completed SOAR training. SOAR educates SOAR Specialists about how SSA and Disability Determination Services (DDS) determine if an individual qualifies for disability benefits and what information caseworkers can provide to help SSA and DDS make accurate decisions. The SOAR model asks caseworkers to take a more active role in communicating with SSA and DDS during the application process. Caseworkers also gather medical information and personal accounts about the applicant's disabling condition in order to write a detailed report for SSA. The average SOAR case requires more effort during the initial application process (an average 35-40 hours per case), but results in more approvals of initial applications in less time when compared to non-SOAR application

### **What kind of assistance can SOAR provide?**

SOAR trained case managers can help your client throughout the SSI/SSDI process by completing and submitting paperwork, and receiving communications on the client's behalf. SOAR case managers will work with your

client to ensure the Social Security Administration sees the full extent of a person's disability.

### **How do I know if my client is eligible for SOAR services?**

Individuals who meet the SSA/SOAR definition of homelessness (living on the streets, "couch surfing," etc.), at risk of homelessness (e.g., home in foreclosure, eviction pending) or exiting a prison, hospital, nursing home, or other institution, and who present with a mental illness and/or physical disability that interferes with their ability to work, may be eligible for the SOAR.

### **Does my client have to be homeless?**

SOAR is not for people who have stable housing. Your client must be living in a place not meant for human habitation, in emergency shelter, at imminent risk of homelessness, or in a Permanent Supportive or Housing or Rapid Rehousing program.

### **How do I refer a client?**

You can refer a client by completing the SOAR Referral, and accompanying ROI's. You can submit them via fax to 401-400-7527, or submit them via the link on the referral documents.

### **What if I do have a case manager or service provider?**

If you are experiencing homelessness, and believe you qualify for SSI or SSDI, we *strongly* recommend you reach out to one of our social-service providers to help complete a referral. A list of our Coalition's social-service providers can be found at [rihomeless.org/coalition-members](http://rihomeless.org/coalition-members).

### **How can being SOAR-trained help my agency?**

SOAR works in several ways:

- Provides training for case managers on how to complete and submit complete and high-quality SSI/SSDI application

- Helps communities establish a process for submitting and processing of SSI/SSDI applications
- Supports State and Local SOAR Leads who support SOAR-trained specialists and engage stakeholders
- Provides technical assistance to keep local SOAR efforts moving forward

**How do I become SOAR certified?**

Anyone who would like to learn more about SOAR and the SSI/SSDI application process is welcome to enroll in the SOAR training. You can find access to this FREE course at [soarworks.samhsa.gov](http://soarworks.samhsa.gov). This training is very intensive and can take up to 20 hours to complete.

Questions? Contact the State Lead Lindsay Cutler at [Lindsay@rihomeless.org](mailto:Lindsay@rihomeless.org)