CABHI: SOAR and IPS Pilot Check-in

Call Summary

October 6, 2016

# State Updates

## Arizona

Adam Robson reported that over the next few months they should see more integration of SOAR and IPS, which are co-located at Lodestar Human Services Campus, which he thinks is an ideal relationship. Still in the early stages of using CABHI grant to stabilize housing for individuals experiencing homelessness.

## Colorado

See Spotlight notes below for Pablo Sandoval’s update!

## Connecticut

No update this month

## Illinois

Stephanie Frank gave a shout out to the “really great team in Illinois doing great things by getting the right people around the table”! She reported that in Peoria two housing agencies with SOAR and IPS integration, are learning from each other and offering suggestions. A SOAR Fundamentals training will be scheduled to discuss any obstacles and lessons learned to date. Calls were held with two other Chicago-based mental health agencies which will participate in the pilot. These agencies have less developed SOAR and IPS integration. Further SOAR trainings will be needed to get programs up to speed and discuss ways to integrate SOAR into their agencies.

## Massachusetts

Kristin Lupfer provided an update from Michael Stepansky, Director of Employment. The IPS program closed recently due to lack of CABHI and alternate funding. However, Massachusetts remains interested in staying in the pilot and actively seeking interested providers to keep things going without direct funding from CABHI. MA does have some capacity to offer IPS training to any homeless-services provider interested in it.

## Michigan

No updates provided on this call

## Mississippi

No updates provided on this call

## Nevada

Ambrosia Crump reminded group that their CABHI grant ended on 9/30 and the biggest challenge in Nevada is no recognized IPS program. Ambrosia hopes to learn from other pilot participants to bring back IPS best practices to state-level administrators. She is also working with the state to support SOAR coordination without CABHI funding as well.

## Ohio

Amy Lamerson joined the pilot on 9/6, so she is still in the early stages trying to get up to speed. Katherine Williams, the CABHI Mental Health Administrator, is helping Amy get acclimated. She stated that the SOAR and IPS programs are operating well in Ohio, but mostly separately, so each need to learn about the other.

## Tennessee

Jenna Robl reports that they have a strong IPS/SOAR implementation in the state, but SOAR is much further along. She reports that one site is doing very well, with referrals from “word of mouth.” Jenna stated that case managers are sharing stories about clients’ misinformation about work, e.g.) lawyers or family members say not to work. However, when peers suggest work, the client is more likely to try work. Jenna reported some struggles with enrollment. She stated that they will align data collection with CABHI quarterly reports which will cut down on time spent on reporting.

## Utah

Phyllis Sharples shared that Utah is having similar challenges with Tennessee about suggesting employment along with SOAR. She stated there is some resistance from clients who want to try one or the other, but not both SOAR and IPS. Phyllis reports they will give a presentation at the Homeless Summit on October 11-13 to help dispel myths, but more work is needed, particularly with case managers to suggest trying both SOAR and IPS. Phyllis shared her recent visit to Park Center in Nashville to learn from a best practice agency which offers SOAR and IPS services, to replicate in Utah.

## Wisconsin

Randy Hahn reports that they are continuing work on streamlining data collection. A difficulty is that they have scattered sites around the state for IPS, while SOAR is centrally located. He shared that IPS services is up to 13 sites in Wisconsin, and SOAR integration is going well. Randy is finding that many Veterans are in need of receiving SSA benefits, and state they “want to work”. Randy will work on improving referrals from SOAR back to IPS. He is excited to be hiring a liaison, and sharing “great” data in December!

# Colorado Spotlight

Pablo Sandoval, IPS trainer, is with the lead SOAR agency Colorado Disability Benefits Support Program (CO-DBS). He recently completed IPS Trainer College at Dartmouth. Before continuing with his presentation, Pablo introduced a few key members of their team who are as follows; Peter Pike, SOAR State Lead,Paul Barnett, State CABHI Grant Administrator,Stacey Teegardin, IPS Trainer,Byron Kish, SOAR Benefits Specialist and Trainer and the rest of the CO CABHI IPS/SOAR team.

Pablo began by sharing how Colorado was able to get integration going and how they continue to make the necessary connections for the successful integration of SOAR and IPS services. Pablo stated, “Our message is that we are working hard to communicate the paradigm shift with our SOAR and IPS partners on using benefits planning in conjunction with supported employment models to support recovery.” Pablo emphasized, “It’s not all or nothing, one can apply for benefits and work at the same time.”

The Colorado IPS/SOAR team has created tools which may be modified to fit the unique needs of an agency. (Note: All Colorado forms are available for [download](https://soarworks.prainc.com/article/cabhi-soar-ips-pilot)). These forms have been updated to include IPS and SOAR. Pablo notes that the Career Profile form is not a predictor of job success. He views it as a working document, which is meant to be modified to fit their needs, from job start to job end.

Pablo shared a few challenges related to training, funding, data tracking and program evaluation. It is Colorado’s goal to provide dual certification for SOAR and CWIC. The team is hammering out work requirements. The team is working on buy-in from CABHI sites after facing initial pushback. Issues with funding pertain to the ending of CABHI grant on September 20th. They were granted a no-cost extension, so the team will move forward with planning kickoff activities. They are reviewing other states, such as California and Oregon, who have integrated IPS with the TANF program. The team is working on addressing data tracking to create a more streamlined system. The team is providing ongoing evaluation and fidelity review through training on any modifications to program design. They will begin fidelity reviews with CABHI sites. Next, the SOAR checklist will be updated to include IPS principles and standards. To download a copy of Pablo’s presentation, [click here](https://soarworks.prainc.com/article/cabhi-soar-ips-pilot).

# Questions received from survey:

1. *I think pairing SOAR and IPS has a lot of promise, but is there an inherent conflict? i.e., SOAR is committed to getting participants onto benefits, while IPS is committed to independent employment - the lynchpin to a life off of benefits. Especially since eligibility for SSI involves a declaration that the applicant cannot work, does this send a mixed message to participants?*

Response: There is no language in the IPS model which indicates a person cannot receive SSA benefits while working. In fact, an [IPS principle](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~ips/page48/page79/files/ips-practice-principles-002880029.pdf) ensures benefits planning counseling. Further, IPS materials references SSA Work Incentives, e.g.) Ticket to Work. Kristin suggested linking to [this document](https://soarworks.prainc.com/sites/soarworks.prainc.com/files/ipsfinal022416_508.pdf) from Dartmouth (also added to SOAR/IPS webpage) if you get pushback from clients, caseworkers, or others. Additionally, it is incorrect to say that SSI eligibility requires a declaration that an applicant cannot work. Eligibility only requires an inability to work at a substantial gainful level (earnings of $1,130/month in 2016). This means that some work is possible and should be encouraged when appropriate for and desired by the individual. Kristin emphasized how important it is to “bust these myths up”. Adam Robson reminded the group “What SOAR is and for whom it is meant- to stabilized income and housing for individuals experiencing homelessness.” Darius from Illinois agreed, and added, “What ends up happening sometimes is our mindset of work is of a 40 hour work week, when most folks that we serve may not want to work 40 hours a week.” He reminded that SSA’s definition of disability does not say “no work.” Pablo concurred and reinforced the notion that benefits planning is so essential to providing holistic services which is why Colorado values SOAR case workers to be CWIC certified.

2. *Our major barrier, which has been previously discussed, is the upcoming termination of funding for our project (effective 9/30). Late project starts due to timeliness in receiving funding has also attributed to our limitations in practice. Our state does not have the existing infrastructure at this point with IPS practice or education, so we are simultaneously at the beginning and the end. However we are seeking to leverage this short period of time to build a bridge between our state employment support services that do exist and the SOAR program and learn best practices to develop our own process of working in concert with our shared client populations.*

Response: Kristin recognized that funding streams for this work have been unstable. Looking at states, such as, Illinois, with braided finding, is one creative way to fund IPS/SOAR integration. Kristin stated that the SOAR TA Center will continue to explore with SAMHSA funding outside of CABHI and share what you are doing in the states. Jen Elder**,** stated thatsince about half of our pilot agencies saw their CABHI grant funding end, please share with the group alternative funding streams and the creative ways you are seeking funding. Jen suggested that groups reach out to the SOAR TA Center to discuss adding SOAR and IPS to federal funding opportunities and proposals.

# Open Discussion

**Peter:** Comment: We are open to recommendations on how to engage SAMHSA to fund new projects.

**Response:** Kristin shared that the SOAR TA Center’s Expert Panel developed a conversation guide about work and brochure on dispelling fears and myths around benefits and employment which will be distributed to this to the group when it is cleared by SAMHSA and DOL. Also, the TA Center will be hosting a webinar on employment to include members of the Expert Panel’s employment subgroup. Kristin hopes to share more information about future products on our next call. Stay tuned!

**Ambrosia Crump**: Why was IPS selected as the best practice for your state for employment supports?

Response: Paul Barnett from Colorado shared that they received a 5-year transformation from SAMHSA to implement IPS at 3 sites, beginning in 2012. IPS is considered an “evidenced based practice”. Darius McKinney from Illinois that they received a Dartmouth/J&J Grant to do IPS in 2005.

# Next Call:

**NOTE! NEW DATE: November 29 from 3-4:30pm ET- focus on data reporting**