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SOAR Implementation During COVID-19

Presented by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration (SAMHSA)
SOAR Technical Assistance (TA) Center
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

April 16, 2020



SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration

Disclaimer

The views, opinions, and content expressed in this presentation do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, or policies of the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Webinar Instructions

- Muting
- Recording availability
- Downloading documents
- Questions and Answers

Purpose and Objectives

- Discover innovative ways of serving individuals experiencing homelessness while maintaining physical/social distance
- Learn strategies for communicating with the Social Security Administration (SSA) and Disability Determination Services (DDS) while offices are closed or working remotely
- Understand the impact of unemployment and stimulus payments on Social Security benefits

Agenda

Presenters

- Kristin Lupfer, Project Director, SAMHSA SOAR TA Center, Policy Research Associates, Delmar, New York
- Jacqueline (Suzie) Brady, SOAR Local Lead for Austin/Travis County, SOAR Team Lead, Supported Housing Services, Integral Care, Austin, Texas
- Ashley Blum, LBSW, CPRP, Director of Homeless Outreach, SOAR Local Lead, Park Center, Nashville, Tennessee

Questions and Answers

- Facilitated by the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center

Welcome!

Asha Stanly, MSW, LICSW
Government Project Officer
Division of State and Community Systems Development
Center for Mental Health Services
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

April 16, 2020



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Substance Abuse and Mental Health
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SOAR Implementation During COVID-19: An Overview

Kristin Lupfer

Project Director

SAMHSA SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR)
Technical Assistance (TA) Center

April 16, 2020



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Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration

What Makes SOAR Unique? You!



SOAR-trained case workers are the heroes!



Addressing the Needs of Applicants and Beneficiaries

- Individuals are still in need of SSI/SSDI application assistance
- SSI/SSDI beneficiaries are concerned about access to ongoing payments
- Many SSI/SSDI beneficiaries who were working have lost their jobs and earned income

The Social Security Administration's Commitment

- Commissioner Andrew Saul's Press Releases
- Benefits will be paid on time
- Online and phone service while offices are closed to the public
- Extending deadlines through the good cause policy
- Suspending medical continuing disability reviews
- Notifying the public about scams

Unemployment Insurance: Overview

- Unemployment Insurance (UI) eligibility is state based, generally:
 - Unemployed due to no fault of your own (lost job due to lack of available work)
 - Meet work and wage requirements (base period)
 - <https://www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/UnemploymentBenefits/find-unemployment-benefits.aspx>
- Federal government adding \$600 per week to the maximum state UI benefit paid for 4 months until July 31, 2020

Unemployment and SSI/SSDI

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

- Recipients are required to apply for any other benefit they may be eligible to receive (e.g. Unemployment Insurance (UI))
- Recipients may be eligible for more income through UI than SSI
- SSI would be suspended while receiving UI over the Federal Benefit Rate

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)

- Recipients may be eligible to receive both UI and SSDI
- There is no impact on the SSDI benefit amount or eligibility

Economic Impact (Stimulus) Payments and SSI/SSDI

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

- Payments are not taxable
- Will not count as income for that month
- Will not be counted as a “resource” for twelve months from receipt
- SSI-only beneficiaries will receive automatic payments by early May

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)

- Payments are not taxable
- Not impacted by unearned income
- No impact on SSDI or Retirement
- No impact on Medicare premiums or eligibility
- SSDI recipients will receive automatic payments end of April

*Beneficiaries with dependents under 17 need to enter info at IRS:

<https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus/non-filers-enter-payment-info-here>

HIPAA During COVID-19

- Notification of Enforcement Discretion
- Telehealth FAQs
- <https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/special-topics/hipaa-covid19/index.html>
- <https://www.samhsa.gov/coronavirus>

Resources and Information Updates

Social Security Administration

- <https://www.ssa.gov/coronavirus/>
 - Subscribe for email updates

SAMHSA SOAR TA Center

- <https://soarworks.prainc.com/article/covid-19-resources-soar-providers>
 - Links to key federal partner’s coronavirus resource websites
 - Strategies shared from the field
 - Communicating with the applicant
 - Obtaining signatures from the applicant
 - Communicating with and submitting documents to SSA/DDS
 - Sample “Good Cause” for late filing letter

SOAR Implementation in Austin, TX During COVID-19 Response

Jacqueline (Suzie) Brady

SOAR Local Lead for Austin/Travis County

SOAR Team Lead, Supported Housing Services

Integral Care - *Healthy Living For Everyone*

April 16, 2020



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Preparation

- Providing cell phones to clients
- Making sure clients have secure mail and a way to check it

Implementation

- Initial phone call with client
- Mail SSA forms that need signatures, facility ROIs, and self-addressed stamped envelope
- Client calls when mail is received to talk through forms/signatures
- Regular calls with client to complete forms and MSR

Communication with SSA SOAR Liaison

- SOAR claims still being processed (by mail)
- Updated fax numbers for all field offices
- Liaison available by email and phone

Communication with DDS

- DDS still working in office but working on remote capability
- All Consultative Exams (CEs) cancelled until further notice and no new exams being scheduled
- Working with DDS to schedule what is needed with providers available

Addressing Ongoing Challenges

- Clients losing phone
- Consultative Exam cancellations

SOAR Implementation in Nashville, TN During COVID-19 Response

Ashley Blum

Director of Homeless Outreach Services

Park Center

Nashville, Tennessee

April 16, 2020



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Substance Abuse and Mental Health
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Street Outreach and Social Distancing

- Outreach during food/survival supplies delivery
- Meeting in parking lots
- PPE and 6 feet distance
- Providing space for required wet signatures
- HMIS allowing for verbal consent

General SOAR

- Electronic signatures for ROIs when able
- Mailing ROIs for wet signatures when necessary
- Screenings via telephone when able
- Telehealth MSEs
- Process for obtaining wet signatures on applications-still required

Hospital SOAR

- Social Workers sending signed ROIs with referral
- Telehealth/phone screenings/application through Social Workers
- Social Worker getting application signatures-bringing to parking lot

Communication with SSA and DDS

SSA

- Application drop to side door
- PERC and payee determination via phone call
- Communicating weekly with our contact for updates on claims

DDS

- All submissions electronic through DDS ERE
- Not always requiring signed MSR
- Time restraints lifted

Addressing Ongoing Challenges

- Being safe, as we are essential to people's lives while they are experiencing homelessness
- Continue to be creative with our practices
- Sanitizing supplies
- Cases processing slower for decisions

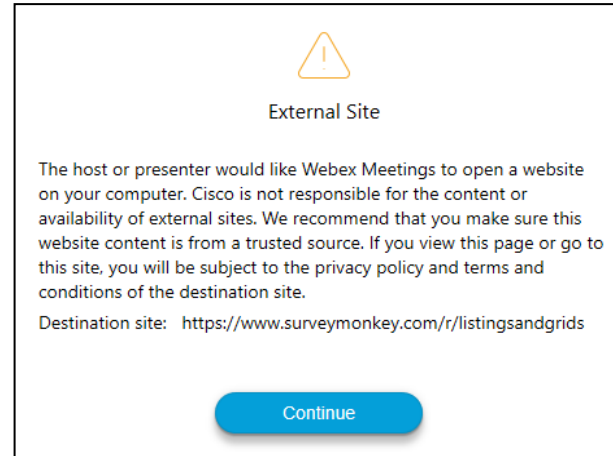
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- ✓ Contact your SAMHSA SOAR TA Center Liaison with questions
- ✓ Take care of yourself!

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SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities.

<https://soarworks.prainc.com>

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