SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) and

the Veteran Affairs (VA) Grant and Per Diem (GPD) Program

Connecting Veterans with Social Security Administration (SSA) disability benefits is a critical step to increasing income stability for Veterans and their families, particularly for those Veterans whose work activity is limited by disabling conditions. The SOAR model helps individuals obtain SSA disability benefits while they are pursuing their vocational and housing goals through the GPD Program.

# Social Security Basics

SSA administers two disability benefit programs:

* Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is a needs-based program for individuals who are blind, disabled, or elderly, with low income/resources.
* Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) is for blind or disabled individuals who are insured through employee and employer contributions to the Social Security Trust Fund.
* In most states, Medicaid and/or Medicare health insurance accompany these benefits for those eligible.

# Grant and Per Diem (GPD) Program

Funded by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the [GPD Program](https://www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp) promotes the development and provision of supportive housing and services to help Veterans who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness achieve residential stability, increase their skill levels and/or income, and obtain greater self-determination. Additionally, the GPD Program offers case management grants to support housing retention for Veterans transitioning from homelessness to permanent housing.

## How does SOAR fit within GPD services?

The SOAR model is an integral part of the GPD’s supportive services component. Income from SSI/SSDI helps Veterans maintain housing stability by:

* increasing successful transitions to permanent housing, and
* reducing returns to homelessness

# Overview of SSA disability benefits for Veterans

Veterans may be approved for SSI/SSDI regardless of their VA disability status. The eligibility criteria and application process for SSA and VA disability benefits differ, and Veterans may be eligible to receive income from one or both programs.

## SSI/SSDI Eligibility

To be eligible for SSI/SSDI, applicants must show medical evidence of a physical and/or mental health condition that:

1. has lasted or is expected to last for at least 12 months or is expected to result in death, and
2. results in functional impairments that limit their ability to work at a substantial gainful level (quantified as $1,350/month in 2022).

Unlike VA benefits, SSI/SSDI eligibility does not require the Veteran’s disability to be linked to their military service and is not impacted by discharge status. Further, benefits are not awarded on a graduated scale based on severity of disability.

# SSA Expedited Processing for Veterans

Veterans may qualify for programs from SSA that expedite disability decisions:

1. *100% Permanent and Total Veterans Initiative*

This initiative expedites the processing of applications from Veterans who have a 100% Permanent and Total (P&T) disability rating from the VA. To receive expedited processing, Veterans should identify themselves as a “Veteran rated 100% P&T” when initiating the SSI/SSDI application and should provide the VA rating notification letter to SSA.

1. *Wounded Warriors*

Veterans who received disabling mental or physical health injuries while on active duty on or after October 1, 2001 are eligible for expedited SSI/SSDI application processing. The injury does not need to have occurred during combat operations. When initiating the SSI/SSDI application, Veterans should inform SSA that their injury occurred while on active duty.

More information about SSA expedited processing for Veterans can be found at: <https://www.ssa.gov/people/veterans/>

# How GPD Grantees Can Support Income Maximization Using SOAR

GPD grantees provide a number of essential services to help Veterans obtain and maintain housing and connect with community resources. While all grantee staff may not be providing direct case management, there are a variety of ways that GPD providers can support Veterans who may be eligible for SSI/SSDI:

* Connect the Veteran to health care
  + Arrange for mental health and medical evaluations
  + Gather medical records in support of the SSI/SSDI application
* Document disability
  + For those providers working directly with Veterans, documentation of the Veteran’s symptoms and functional limitations in daily activities, social interactions, and concentration supports the SSI/SSDI application
* Explore all potential income sources with the Veteran
  + Use the [VA Income and Benefits Calculator](https://soarworks.samhsa.gov/article/income-benefits-calculator) to start discussions about income maximization
  + Connect the Veteran with disability application assistance and employment supports
  + Connect the Veteran with a benefits planner through [SSA’s Ticket to Work](https://choosework.ssa.gov) program or through a VA Regional Benefits Office or local Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs).

# Resources:

The SOAR model assists Veterans nationwide who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness in accessing SSA disability benefits. Training in the SOAR model is available, free of charge, from the SAMHSA SOAR Technical Assistance Center. For more information, contact [SOAR@prainc.com](mailto:SOAR@prainc.com) or visit <https://soarworks.samhsa.gov>. Additional resources on SOAR for Veterans is available at: <https://soarworks.samhsa.gov/topics/veterans>.