

December 2012



## SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery

# Illinois E-News

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### Questions?

We're here to help!



**Contact Beth Orchard**  
in DuPage & Kane  
counties or **Sue**  
**Augustus** if outside this  
area.

### Meet a Trainer: Aaron Eldridge

**Aaron Eldridge** is a Northern IL trainer based at Supportive Housing Providers Association (SHPA). Before starting at SHPA, Aaron worked for a SHPA member agency where he did case management for persons experiencing homelessness. While there, he assisted many individuals in applications for SSI/SSDI benefits. He was promoted to supervisor after five years, working in that position for three years. At SHPA, he learned about SOAR and wished he could have used it while doing previous benefits applications.



**Through training numerous frontline staff** that assist those experiencing homelessness, more people will be helped. Illinois has a great SOAR training program, by having trainers across the entire state participate in a monthly committee meeting to discuss ideas, problem solve and plan trainings.

Aaron loves being a SOAR trainer because, during every training he has done he sees the **“light comes on” moment** where the trainees really understand what their applications have been missing and they look forward to doing the next application!

### News You Can Use

#### SOAR Survey!

**We are looking for trainees in SOAR** to fill out a brief 10 minute questionnaire about the experience of creating SSI/SSDI applications using SOAR, thoughts on SOAR training which will help us understand your experience better.

**This survey will help us create a better process for you.** Our team will review the data to find ways of better providing refresher trainings and serving future trainees. Click [here](#) to start. Email [Beth Orchard](#) with any questions!

### Making the Connection

#### Medicaid & SOAR

**Medicaid expansion:** we have all heard about it, but how will this affect **SOAR?** Beginning in January 2014, individuals under 65 years of age with income below 133 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) will be eligible for Medicaid *without having to prove disability*. **More information on the Medicaid expansion in Illinois can be found at [www.illinoishealthmatters.org](http://www.illinoishealthmatters.org).**



**Learn about Medicaid & SOAR's increasing importance** through a webinar presented about **Medicaid in the Era of Health Reform**. Click [here](#) to access the video presentation. Contact [Beth Orchard](#) with any questions.





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### SOAR Q&A

**Q: I need to report my outcomes. What is the process?**

**A:** We use OAT (Online App-lication Tracking) for SOAR outcomes. Two [webinars](#) are available on how to use this resource. If you are ready to get started or need assistance, email [soar@prainc.com](mailto:soar@prainc.com).

**Q: My local SSA office is not familiar with SOAR. Who can I contact to get them on board with SOAR?**

**A:** You can email [Beth Orchard](#) or [Sue Augustus](#) with any questions related to SSA offices and SOAR problems. SSA is very supportive of SOAR but sometimes some of the local office staff are not as familiar with SOAR as others. **We are here to help!**

**Share your client's success story!**  
**Contact [Beth Orchard](#) so we can print it in the next newsletter!**

### Victory Laps!

#### *Sharman Powers-Chestnut Health Systems*

**Sharman filed 7 SOAR applications and 5 Medicaid applications successfully.** She is currently working on 3 more cases. Two of these clients were let go by their attorneys and were picked them up at the hearing stage. Clients Vicki and David were let go by the same lawyer because of their continued substance abuse. Sharman was able to show the judge the reason for the continued use. David was told by Social Security he could perform light duty work and they listed three jobs he could do. Sharman went on the internet and found those three jobs and the duties. She then compared the duties with David's impairments and showed why he wouldn't be able to perform those jobs.

**The decision was fully favorable** and they even went back further than Sharman initially stated. He was awarded over \$54,000. Our company was able to collect three months of back bills and rent. Vicki's case was dropped at the ALJ stage, but Sharman was able to put together additional information regarding her physical and mental health. She gathered information online about her liver disease and symptoms associated with stage three cirrhosis in addition to medical information from her doctors.

**Sharman always approaches each case like a detective.** She never files a case before gathering all medical information, letters from family, jails, neighbors, and employers if possible. **Sharman has received 90% of her approvals within 30 to 45 days.**

#### *Angel Adam-Wellspring Resources*

Cedric has a long legal history as well as largely untreated mental health symptoms. When they first met, Cedric was barely scraping by with money from family to keep his house without income but was so paralyzed by paranoia he could not leave his house to work. **Angel realized after a few meetings he would be a great candidate for SOAR.**

It was hard at first because he did not believe he was sick. However, through the process of questioning and gathering information for the functional report, Cedric noticed he was having problems that needed to be addressed – such as anger, violence, hallucinations/delusions, paranoia, not sleeping, eating, etc. They filed for SSI in November last year and he was approved in the end of March of this year. **Cedric is now able to pay his bills with the income and actually has been able to get out of the house more with the help of medications and receiving the medical card, due to being approved for SSI.**

#### *Melissa Johnson-H Group*

**Our agency met Mr. B. on outreach** and in December 2010 he was hospitalized for frostbite from living outdoors behind a flower shop. We were contacted by Mr. B.'s social worker and explained our services and offered our help but didn't see him until a few weeks later. In March 2011, he returned again with a commitment to change his life. Mr. B. was homeless, living on the streets of Carbondale, Illinois for over 15-years without family support, only an 8<sup>th</sup> grade education and, after assessment, was diagnosed with major depression illness, with psychotic features/ PTSD/Alcohol Abuse. We submitted his SOAR claim in April 2011, along with Function Report and MHA. It was discovered during a consult Mr. B. witnessed the violent death of both his parents and was made to live in Mississippi with relatives who produced 'moonshine,' which he drank instead of milk.

**Mid-August, Mr. B. was notified via phone he was approved for \$712.00 a month.** On August 30, 2011 he was awarded \$2,022.00 and again on September 1 was awarded \$2,022.00. Mr. B. is no longer homeless and has a payee to help manage his money. This was a team effort for our PATH team and the local SSA office. Our team is very proud of the SOAR process in this case and we wish every case moved that fast but **now Mr. B. has stable supports in place to assist in his continued recovery with the help of SOAR.**