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SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery

Illinois E-News

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Have a question?



We're here to help!

Contact me if you're in DuPage & Kane counties or **Sue Augustus** if you're outside this area.

Meet a Trainer!

Johnna Lowe works as the *Residents Education & Advocacy Coordinator* for the Supportive Housing Providers Association (SHPA) and supports the advocacy and educational advancement of our membership's residents. She consistently encourages the residents that they hold the key to improving certain situations in their lives through self-advocacy as a stepping stone to improving their life's quality. SHPA also is contracted by the state of IL to provide technical assistance to permanent supportive housing agencies and has sent all their staff to Train-the-Trainer to facilitate SOAR.

Johnna said, "A key take away from SOAR training is that **Agents of Hope** are able to feel more confident about the SSI and SSDI application process because they understand what is required of them." A successful SOAR program engages all stakeholders in a way that provides mutual peer support, has a vested interest from all stakeholders, and is adamant about reporting and tracking their progress. In the past few months, I have been part of a facilitation team that has trained over 70 people. Organizations are looking for more staff at their agencies to have expertise in SOAR and registration for SOAR trainings have had waiting lists. **SOAR has a bright future in Illinois!**



News You Can Use

SOAR National

Cost of Living Adjustment for 2013

SSI/SSDI benefits for nearly 62 millions Americans will rise by 1.7% in 2013. These benefits will increase the impact for millions who use them. The increase will begin for 8 million beneficiaries of SSI December 31, 2012, followed by more than 56 million beneficiaries of Social Security in January, 2013. SOAR can make a difference by helping more people achieve access to these benefits. Read more [here](#).

Making the Connection

Disability★gov

New Initiative Launched

"What's Your Connection" will run from October 30, 2012 to July 31, 2013 as a social media and grassroots tool for building support and starting conversations about inclusion of persons with disabilities in their communities and the workplace.

Disability.gov has many other resources that may be helpful including a user-friendly page on benefits for those seeking more information. Check it out [here](#)!





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SOAR Q&A

Q: It's been awhile since I've been to a SOAR training. Do you offer refresher trainings to hone my skills?

A: Great question! We are working on developing a Q&A session for the Springfield & Rockford trainees. This will be a time to bring questions about the SOAR process and build peer support. Stay tuned for more details!

Q: Who is my SOAR contact at DDS?

A: We have partners within DDS ready to support SOAR applications. We can help answer questions about who to contact or to troubleshoot with your local DDS office. Email [me](#) or [Sue Augustus](#) (outside Kane/DuPage counties) for more info!

Victory Laps!

Katherine-Human Service Center-Sparta

I've been at my job for a year and a half and received SOAR training in Nov. 2011. I've assisted several clients with SSI/SSDI applications. I assisted a homeless man with no income, food, medical benefits or means of getting around. Through SOAR, it was easy to do the intake, call Social Security to set up an appointment and complete the application. The client was able to get his benefits, find a place to live, get a LINK card and a medical card. ***This is one of my most successful cases thanks to SOAR!***

Chelsea Barney-Outreach Community Ministry-Warrenville

"Jennifer" came to me discouraged after her SSDI application denial. This young, formerly active wife and working mother became suddenly and profoundly disabled after febrile complications and the onset of severe, debilitating fibromyalgia. Financial strain was adding even more pressure as Jennifer was no longer able to work. This would be my first SOAR application.

Using the SOAR method, I collected medical evidence from all her service providers, wrote a medical summary report, and filed an appeal. After submitting a particularly lengthy medical record, the adjudicator told me they had more than enough evidence and not to submit anything else!

Five months after our first meeting, Jennifer received her SSDI approval. She was thrilled and said without my help, she never would have been able to get those necessary benefits. Working with Jennifer was a thoroughly rewarding experience.

James Kucer-Catholic Charities Daybreak Shelter-Joliet

In April, 2012, Tony arrived at the shelter via Police Escort. I met with him and accepted him as a client. A few months passed and, after much work and ***SOAR training***, I applied for his benefits. Tony has a master's degree and certificate in teaching but his mental illness took over and made it difficult for him to remain stable and working. He was diagnosed with Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID). He struggles with himself daily, often forgetting who he is and what he has done during the day. Late July we started the application process for SSDI and SSI. After two months of collecting medical documentation and writing a medical summary we turned in everything late September to SSA. ***Within 18 days we received approval!*** However, Tony's file was randomly picked to go through a more rigorous quality control check through a DDS board. Within two days they also approved Tony for his SSDI benefits. Tony was homeless and, with my help and SOAR, he was approved within 88 days from the protective filing date until the decision by DDS.

Share your client's success story! Contact me so we can print it in the next newsletter.

Webinar: Increase Your SOAR Knowledge

The next webinar will be: **SOAR and Corrections** on *November 28, 3:00-4:30 pm (EST)*. Registration information will be forthcoming. If you missed any of the recent webinars on "Collaborations with SSA and DDS" (Sept. 20) or "SOAR and Employment" (Oct. 23), they are available to watch online [here](#).

