

## SOAR Enhances Recovery and Promotes Successful Reentry

### SOAR Overview

SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) is a national program designed to increase access to the disability income benefit programs administered by the Social Security Administration.

### The Need

- 641,100 people who had been sentenced to state and federal prison were released to their communities in 2015. <https://csgjusticecenter.org/nrrc/facts-and-trends/>
- 9 million people are released from jail each year. <https://csgjusticecenter.org/nrrc/facts-and-trends/>
- 40 percent of jail inmates reported at least one disability (Branson, Maruschak, and Berzofsky, 2015)

*“People with serious mental illness are more likely to be arrested multiple times for the same crime, spend more time in jail before adjudication, serve longer sentences, and have higher recidivism rates than those without mental illness.”*

*(Wrenn, McGregor, and Munetz, 2018)*

Criminal justice involvement and serious mental illness pose unique challenges for community service providers and reentry staff responsible with helping people who are incarcerated to plan for successful transition to communities.

SOAR can be a viable tool in reentry efforts for those who are at-risk for homelessness upon release and can increase housing stability for those who are released to permanent housing without income.

### Importance of SSI/SSDI for Justice-Involved Persons with Serious Mental Illness

#### Income

The income from SSI/SSDI benefits can increase housing opportunities for people returning to communities.

#### Health Insurance

People returning to communities can use the Medicaid and Medicare health insurance that comes with SSI/SSDI for physical health and mental health treatment and services.

#### Goal: “Decision Before Discharge”

Beginning the application pre-release can facilitate expedited access to benefits upon release.

SSA Benefits + Support = Increased Housing Opportunities and Access to Treatment >> Reduction in Recidivism

The Social Security Administration (SSA) defines disability as the inability to engage in substantial gainful activity (SGA) because of medically determinable physical or mental impairment(s) that has lasted or is expected to last for a continuous period of at least 12 months OR result in death.

### SOAR and Criminal Justice Tools and Resources

- [Identifying SOAR Applications in Criminal Justice Settings](#)

- [SOAR CJ Stakeholder Team Matrix](#)
- [Action Plan and Sample Action Plan Template: Criminal Justice](#)
- [SOAR Sample Referral Tool: Criminal Justice](#)

### SOAR CJ Technical Assistance Awards

Through this award, recipients are able to improve their efforts in connecting individuals leaving correctional facilities to needed resources. Each awardee received an on-site planning meeting, participation in the SOAR Leadership Academy, support through the SOAR Online Course (OLC), and tracking outcomes through the Online Application Tracking (OAT) system.

#### 2017 Criminal Justice Technical Assistance Awards

- Burrell, Inc.
- Consumer Health Coalition
- Elgin Police Department
- Maricopa County Correctional Health Services
- Mecklenburg County Criminal Justice Services
- The Kent Center

#### 2018 Criminal Justice Technical Assistance Awards

- Delaware Department of Corrections
- Directions for Living
- Martin Girls Academy
- Mississippi Department of Corrections
- Newark Community Solutions
- New Hour for Women and Children

### SOAR and Criminal Justice Outcomes

- Cumulative total of SOAR-assisted initial SSI/SSDI applications for people residing in correctional facilities: 319.
- Average days to decision: 79 days.
- Approval Rate: 76%

### SOAR Online Course Participation from Criminal Justice Agencies

429\* Agencies have enrolled in the SOAR Online Course including Sheriff's Offices, Specialty Courts, State Departments of Correction, Reentry Projects, Local Jails, and Public Defenders.

79\* case workers (from 23 states) have successfully completed the course. Georgia, Florida, Michigan, and Kansas lead in completions.

\*Enrollment and completion data as of August 1, 2018

| State              | Count of CJ OLC Passes* |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Alabama            | 1                       |
| Arizona            | 1                       |
| California         | 1                       |
| Delaware           | 1                       |
| Florida            | 14                      |
| Georgia            | 15                      |
| Illinois           | 3                       |
| Kansas             | 8                       |
| Louisiana          | 1                       |
| Maryland           | 5                       |
| Michigan           | 9                       |
| Mississippi        | 1                       |
| Montana            | 3                       |
| New Mexico         | 1                       |
| New York           | 1                       |
| Oklahoma           | 1                       |
| Pennsylvania       | 1                       |
| Rhode Island       | 1                       |
| South Carolina     | 2                       |
| Texas              | 4                       |
| Utah               | 1                       |
| Virginia           | 3                       |
| Washington         | 1                       |
| <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>79</b>               |

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