Issue Brief

2023 SOAR Outcomes

SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

Acknowledgments

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OVERVIEW

About SOAR

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 (SSA) for eligible adults and children who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and have a serious mental illness, medical impairment, and/or a co-occurring substance use disorder.

SOAR Training

The SAMHSA SOAR Technical Assistance (TA) Center offers two Online Courses that train case workers to assist individuals in applying for SSI/SSDI (SSA's disability income benefit programs). The courses provide comprehensive information about SSI/SSDI and the disability determination process, including the SOAR Critical Components of completing and submitting applications.

SOAR Leadership

State and Local Leads spearhead and coordinate the implementation of SOAR initiatives. These leaders identify and engage community partners to participate in steering committees whose goal is to create and implement a SOAR action plan and process for SSI/SSDI application submission. These committees meet regularly to collaborate, report on progress, and troubleshoot challenges.

Contact SOAR

📞 518-439-7415 x2
✉ soar@prainc.com
🌐 https://soarworks.samhsa.gov/

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Supplemental Security Income (SSI)/Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) model helps increase access to Social Security Administration (SSA) disability benefits for eligible adults and children who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and have a serious mental illness, medical impairment, and/or co-occurring substance use disorder.

Over the last 18 years, the SOAR model has been used to assist over 105,013 people who were experiencing or at risk of homelessness with applications for SSI and/or SSDI, the two disability income benefit programs administered by SSA.

The SAMHSA SOAR TA Center requests voluntary submission of SOAR outcomes from states annually on a fiscal year from July 1 through June 30. The 2023 SOAR fiscal year was July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023. Unless otherwise noted, these are the data reported in this issue brief.

FY2023 SOAR Super Stars[1]

✿ CONSISTENCY AND IMPACT

DECISIONS	APPROVAL RATE

MARYLAND
| 1,973 | 86% |

PENNSYLVANIA
| 4,760 | 90% |

ARKANSAS
| 1,327 | 84% |

TENNESSEE
| 3,046 | 90% |

NORTH CAROLINA
| 3,426 | 75% |
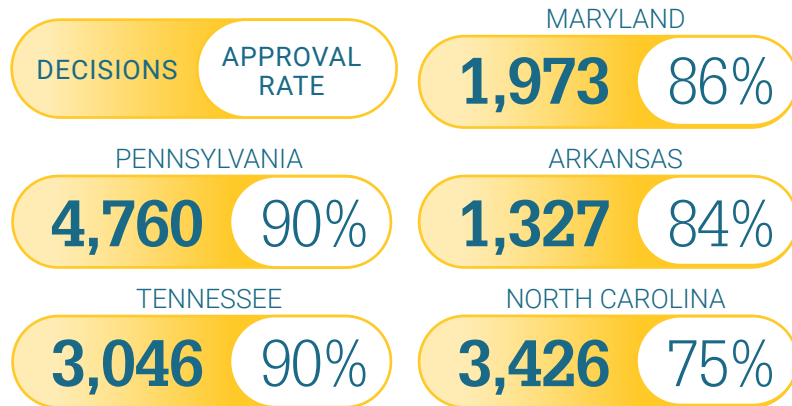
Pennsylvania and Tennessee continue to show the most consistency and impact, receiving large numbers of cumulative decisions (4,760 for Pennsylvania and 3,046 for Tennessee) and maintaining high approval rates (90 percent for both Pennsylvania and Tennessee). Maryland, Arkansas, and North Carolina are also continuously producing impressive numbers: 1,973 decisions with an 86 percent approval rate in Maryland, 1,327 decisions with an 84 percent approval rate in Arkansas, and 3,426 decisions with a 75 percent approval rate in North Carolina.

★ OVER 4,000 DECISIONS

Five states have over **4,000 cumulative decisions:** Florida, Ohio, California, Pennsylvania, and Georgia. Notably, Florida has had 5,482 approvals!

☆ OVER 2,000 APPROVALS

Sixteen states have over 2,000 approvals: Florida, Ohio, California, Pennsylvania, Georgia, Utah, Michigan, Oregon, North Carolina, Minnesota, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Nebraska, New York, Virginia, and Texas.
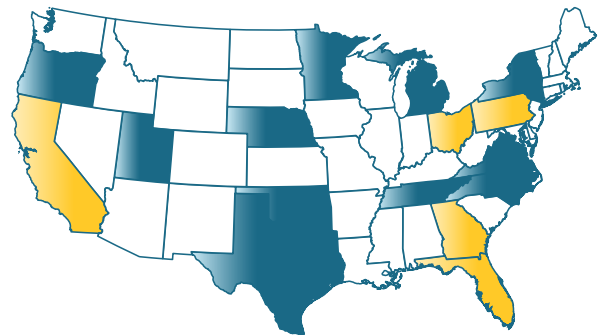
● *Over 4,000 decisions and 2,000 approvals*
● *Over 2,000 approvals*

🏅 TOP APPROVAL RATES

Our "Top Ten" criteria required that states had at least 250 cumulative decisions, approval rates at or above the national average in FY2023, and at least 24 decisions in FY2023 (2 per month). The average cumulative approval rate for these rock-star states is 81 percent!

In order of highest average cumulative approval rate, the **Top Ten** states are Tennessee, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Arkansas, North Carolina, Wyoming, Oklahoma, Virginia, Nevada, and New Mexico. We proudly welcome New Mexico into the "Top Ten" this year!

TOP 10 STATES

Tennessee
Pennsylvania
Maryland
Arkansas
North Carolina

Wyoming
Oklahoma
Virginia
Nevada
New Mexico

81% APPROVAL RATE
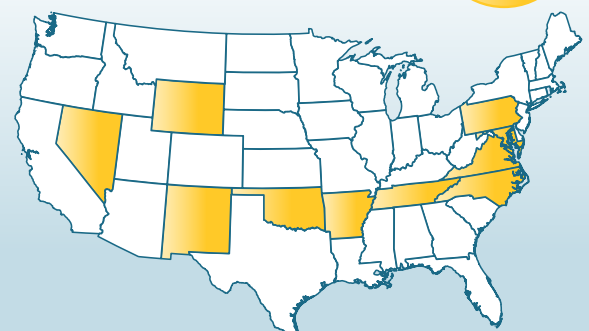
MOST IMPROVED **CAPACITY**

PERCENT INCREASE IN APPLICATIONS

MISSOURI	TENNESSEE
66%	**34%**

NEW MEXICO	COLORADO	MONTANA
26%	**23%**	**20%**
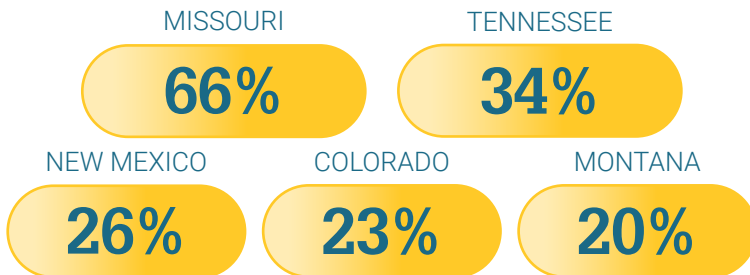
Missouri, Tennessee, New Mexico, Colorado, and Montana showed great improvement in total decisions in FY2023 compared to the previous year. Missouri went from 67 decisions in FY2022 to 111 decisions in FY2023, a 66 percent increase! Tennessee saw a 34 percent increase in applications, New Mexico a 26 percent increase, Colorado a 23% increase, and Montana a 20 percent increase.

MOST IMPROVED **APPROVAL RATES**

Montana and New Mexico showed the most improvement in their approval rates from FY2022 to FY2023! Montana's approval rate increased by 46 percent, and New Mexico had a 23 percent increase in approval rate.

MOST IMPROVED **DAYS TO DECISION**

FY2022 DAYS TO DECISION	FY2023 DAYS TO DECISION	PERCENT DECREASE

SOUTH CAROLINA

99	72	27%

ARKANSAS			COLORADO		
95	80	16%	241	207	14%
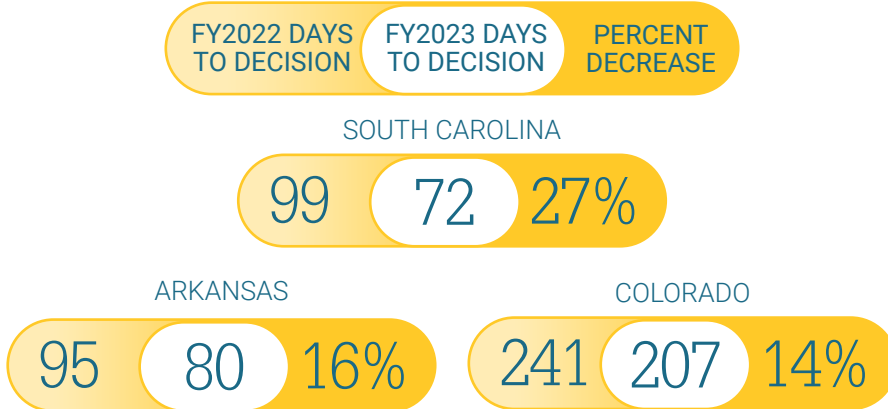
Three states showed great reductions in their average days to decision. South Carolina went from an average of 99 days to decision in FY2022 to an average of 72 days in FY2023, a 27 percent reduction. Arkansas dropped from an average of 95 days to decision in FY2022 to 80 days in FY2023, a 16 percent reduction. Finally, Colorado had a 14 percent reduction in days to decision.

CUMULATIVE OUTCOMES

65%	56,481	8,891	65,372
CUMULATIVE INITIAL APPROVAL RATE	CUMULATIVE INITIAL APPROVALS	CUMULATIVE APPEAL APPROVALS	PEOPLE RECEIVING BENEFITS BECAUSE OF SOAR
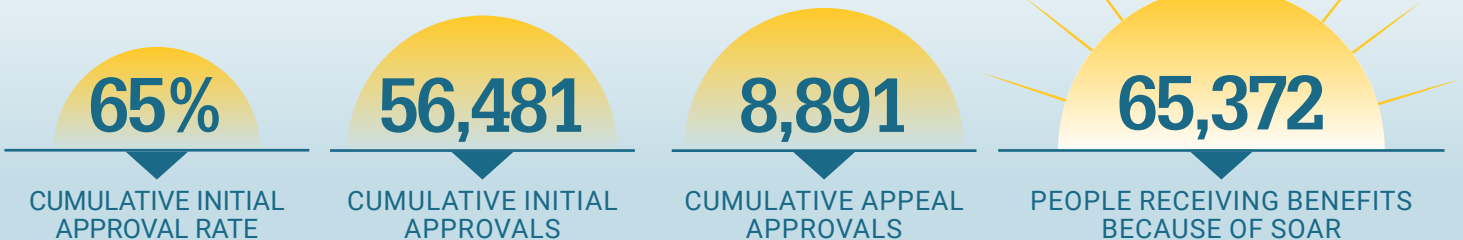
💡 Community Spotlight: Success in New Mexico

The SAMHSA SOAR TA Center is proud to highlight the fantastic progress made by SOAR caseworkers, Local Leads, and the State Team Lead in New Mexico! This year, the State of New Mexico increased its number of decisions by 26 percent over its FY2022 totals and improved its approval rate by 23 percent. An increase in quantity and quality! These improvements are credited to a **renewed focus on communication and education**. The state team sends a bi-monthly newsletter with updated information on the SOAR process, refresher information, articles from the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center, updates on SOAR training in the state, and a SOAR Specialist of the Month recognition.

They conduct monthly virtual educational sessions, including question and answer sessions with both SSA and DDS, training on ALJ Hearings, and a presentation by the State of New Mexico Human Services Department/Behavioral Health Division's Supportive Housing Coordinator Supervisor. They have also expanded their Steering Committee to include more key players in addressing homelessness in New Mexico.

Laura "Bug" Carlson from Heading Home in Albuquerque shared, "I supervise a team of extremely competent SOAR Specialists who all go beyond SSI/SSDI applications and ensure participants have access to housing resources and any available services possibly needed." Kat Cole, who works on the SOAR Team at Heading Home, states, "I am a year into this now, and I love the Heading Home team. **The compassion and passion for the people in our program is incredible**!"

FY2023 OUTCOMES

Over the last 18 years, the SOAR model has been used to assist over 105,013 people who were experiencing or at risk of homelessness with applications for SSI and/or SSDI, the two disability income benefit programs administered by SSA.

Of the applications assisted using SOAR, **65 percent**, representing 56,481 persons, have been approved for SSI/SSDI upon *initial* application since SOAR began (Table 1).[2] An additional 8,891 persons, whose applications were denied initially, were approved on reconsideration or at an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) Hearing (Table 2). Taken together, since 2006, the SOAR approach is responsible for assisting **65,372 persons** who were experiencing or at risk of homelessness to access Social Security disability income benefits.

In FY2023, there were 2,604 approvals on initial applications. Decisions on SOAR-assisted initial applications were received in an average of **167 days** with an allowance rate of **66 percent**. This exceeds the initial allowance rate of 30 percent for all persons aged 18-64 who applied for SSI or SSDI in FY2021.[3]

We estimate that in FY2023 alone, SSI/SSDI benefits for individuals served by SOAR brought over **$717 million** into the economies of participating states and localities.

APPEALS

States continue to use the SOAR model to assist with applications in the appeals process, both with reconsiderations and ALJ hearings. In FY2023, 763 SOAR-assisted decisions were rendered at the appeals level, with **42 percent** of all reconsiderations or ALJ hearings resulting in an allowance (Table 2). SOAR-assisted appeals took an average of **196 days**, as compared to the national average hearing office processing time of 455 days, resulting in applicants receiving lifesaving benefits significantly faster.[4] For those states that track their outcomes in OAT, we can report on Reconsiderations and ALJ hearings separately. In FY2023, there were 499 reconsiderations approved, with a 35 percent approval rate in an average of 167 days. SOAR programs assisting at the ALJ hearing level were very successful, with a 74 percent approval rate on 104 hearings in an average of 341 days.

FUNDING AND SUSTAINABILITY

In FY2023, 17 states reported successfully securing **new** funding for their SOAR programs. Funding for SOAR programs continues to grow with diverse funding streams. In Indiana, they are using $1.4 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to support SOAR initiatives for one year. Nationwide, there are **322 full-time and 125 part-time SOAR-dedicated positions**.

- The average annual salary for dedicated SOAR benefits specialists, as reported by 9 states, was $46,000.

- Salary ranges for SOAR staff ranged from $32,000 to 53,000, depending on local cost of living and staff expertise.

- Funding for SOAR positions came from federal programs (Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH), Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Mental Health Block Grant (MHBG), Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), and Medicaid), state and local funds, and foundation funding.

- Securing funding for dedicated positions remains a priority. States reported that it took, on average, **29 hours of staff time** to complete each SSI/SSDI application.

Figure 1. SOAR-Dedicated Full-Time Position Funding

153	Local or State
20	Medicaid
43	PATH
19	Other
68	MHBG
9	Foundation
8	CDBG
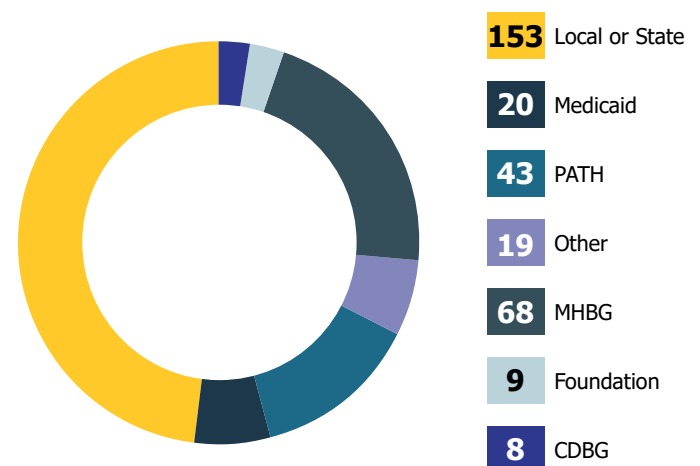
IMPLEMENTATION OF CRITICAL COMPONENTS

States with higher approval rates credit their capacity for implementing SOAR critical components and their attention to submission of high-quality applications.[5] The five SOAR critical components of application assistance include the use of the SSA-1696 Appointment of Representative form; collection and submission of medical records; submission of a Medical Summary Report, co-signed by an acceptable medical source when possible; and quality review of applications before submission. The use of these components statistically increases the likelihood of approval on initial applications for eligible applicants and also results in the following:[6]

- **Better communication with SSA and DDS.** 95 percent of applications were submitted using the SSA-1696 Appointment of Representative Form as recommended by SOAR.

- **Better documentation.** 84 percent of applications were submitted with medical records, and 68 percent were submitted with a Medical Summary Report.

- **Fewer consultative exams.** Only 25 percent of applications required a consultative examination.

> "I feel a deep sense of pride and gratitude for the incredible work our providers do, particularly in their efforts to support the homeless outreach programs in **Wisconsin**. Each day, their unwavering dedication and compassion make a difference in the lives of some of those who need it most. It was so wonderful to complete site visits in person this year and hear more about the unique ways PATH and SOAR agencies are providing quality homeless outreach and case management in Wisconsin communities! The agencies' commitment to providing outreach, shelter, and connection to essential services for people experiencing homelessness has restored hope in challenging circumstances. The PATH and SOAR impact has extended beyond just meeting immediate needs, as case managers have also played a vital role in empowering individuals to rebuild their lives and reintegrate into their communities. SOAR providers have shown exceptional teamwork, innovative approaches, and resourcefulness in tackling the complex issue of homelessness and benefit acquisition."
>
> -**Chelsey Myhre Foster**, Former Wisconsin SOAR State Team Lead

💡 Spotlight on Community Economic Impact: Pennslyvania

SOAR in Pennsylvania had another successful year with one SOAR provider in Allegheny County breaking the $6,000,000 barrier for annual cumulative benefits paid from 7/1/2022–6/30/2023. The Pittsburgh Mercy program has now exceeded $23,000,000 in aggregate benefits paid. The Homeless Advocacy Project (HAP) out of Philadelphia continues to use pro bono attorneys and paralegals to expand the capacity of their SOAR program while also conducting training and refresher courses to promote the use of SOAR. The SOAR program in Montgomery County exceeded their goals regarding the number of individuals served and applications submitted. Word of their success has spread, resulting in referrals from additional community providers serving individuals experiencing homelessness.

SPECIAL POPULATIONS

✊ Veterans

SOAR works closely with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and state and local Veteran initiatives to ensure those eligible for SSA benefits can apply. Community collaborations include working closely with VA Medical Centers, Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) programs, Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) grantees, and many others.

- 18 states reported specific collaborations to serve Veterans in their SOAR programs. In Wyoming, the Volunteers of America (VOA) of the Northern Rockies assisted 20 eligible Veterans, 19 of whom were approved for benefits!

- 239 Veterans received SOAR application assistance in FY2023.

🍎 Youth in Transition

Young adults and youth in transition face particular challenges when applying for SSA disability benefits—they are often too old for child services but may not be ready or eligible for adult services. However, accessing benefits for this age group is possible despite myths to the contrary.

- States using the OAT system reported assisting 319 young people ages 18-24 to apply for SSA disability benefits in FY2023. These initial applications were decided with a **68 percent approval rate** in an average of 160 days. Cumulatively, SOAR programs have served 3,561 young people with a 69 percent approval rate in 112 days.

💡 Spotlight on Increased Capacity: Missouri

Missouri saw a 66 percent increase in SOAR-assisted SSI/SSDI applications this reporting period. Missouri SOAR providers submitted 111 applications with a 67 percent approval rate. These outcomes can be partially attributed to the state-wide implementation of the Missouri Department of Mental Health's Housing Liaison program, which added 47 SOAR-certified case managers who conduct regular outreach to those experiencing homelessness in their communities. Additionally, Missouri is excited about their additional systems-level collaborations: presenting on SOAR to Continua of Care, rebuilding community relationships after COVID-19, and ongoing communication with SSA representatives.

🧒 Children

SOAR was originally developed to assist with adult SSI/SSDI applications and has since expanded to include SSI applications for children. The SAMHSA SOAR TA Center has developed several tools and resources for providers working with children and youth, including the SOAR Online Course: Child Curriculum.

In FY2023, an additional 142 case workers from 36 states became SOAR-trained in assisting with child and youth SSI applications. Heading Home in Albuquerque, New Mexico, has a new SOAR representative that is child-certified and is actively working on child SSI cases.

These providers have cumulatively received **799 decisions** on child SSI applications with a **74 percent approval rate** in an average of 128 days to decision. In FY2023, there were 71 decisions with an **80 percent approval rate** in an average of 197 days.

SYSTEMS-LEVEL SUPPORT

SOAR Leaders are supporting SOAR efforts and implementation in their states through many activities that improve communication, knowledge, and the quality of applications.

There are 30 Steering Committees that meet quarterly (17), bi-monthly (9), and monthly (4). There are 24 Practitioner meetings being held monthly or more frequently to help support SOAR case workers. Fifteen states held 29 SOAR Online Course Cohorts for 546 participants, and

13 states hosted 30 SOAR Online Course Review Sessions for over 500 participants.

Additionally, due to increased efforts on SOAR implementation with peer specialists, there are now 813 peer specialists who have successfully completed the SOAR Online Course, 304 peer specialists registered in OAT, and 7 states that accept SOAR Online Course CEUs for their peer certification requirements.

💡 Spotlight on Systems-Level Support: Illinois SOAR Coordinator

For this reporting period, the Illinois Supportive Housing Providers Association (SHPA) hired a full-time Statewide SOAR Coordinator. They have worked on many collaborations to bring awareness to social service agencies across the state, including hosting SOAR 101 webinars and facilitating SOAR Online Course training cohorts for the Adult and Child Curricula. Recognizing the need for additional SOAR Local Leads, they began a recruiting campaign. They also created a monthly newsletter that provides helpful information about the SOAR process and other related topics from SSA and DDS and established a statewide strategic planning meeting that includes the City of Rockford, PATH providers, the Illinois Departments of Juvenile Justice, Corrections, and Children and Families, and Illinois Continua of Care.

COLLABORATIONS

💼 Employment

While SOAR seeks to end homelessness through increased access to SSI/SSDI income supports, SOAR also encourages employment to increase individual income and promote recovery. Fifteen states reported collaborations with employment and/or work incentive programs. For example, the Nebraska Homeless Assistance Program funds SOAR Local Leads and employment services at the same provider agencies. Employment tracking is still sporadic for SOAR programs, but of the 33 communities that reported, **167 people were working at the time of their SSI/SSDI application** and reported total additional earnings of **$131,336—an average of $786 per applicant**!

🏥 Health Care Providers and Hospitals

Healthcare providers that serve uninsured individuals benefit when their patients obtain the Medicaid coverage that accompanies SSI in most states. Medicaid can pay for ongoing health care and, in many states, provides retroactive payment for uncompensated care. Hospitals can also reduce expensive emergency care services by linking patients to ongoing community treatment and support providers.

SOAR-trained staff at the State Hospital in Arkansas had a 100 percent approval rate on 26 applications in an average of 70 days. In South Carolina, the Department of Mental Health (DMH) Office of Transition Programs (OTP) now has four SOAR-trained Entitlement Specialists who provide SSI/SSDI application

assistance to patients discharged from DMH hospitals through an SSA pre-release agreement. Additionally, 25 states reported some or all of the following collaborations with hospitals:

- Agreements with medical records departments for expedited records at no cost

- Easy access to needed assessments

- Dedicated benefits specialist positions within the hospital

- Grant funding to support local nonprofit SOAR programs

- Discharge planning in state hospitals

⚖ Legal Systems

To connect individuals leaving correctional facilities or involved in criminal legal systems or specialty courts to needed treatment, it is critical to leverage state and federal

investments such as SSI and SSDI. These federal programs can promote access to services that increase the likelihood of post-release success and reduce recidivism.

Last year, the South Carolina Department of Corrections (DOC) had a 93 percent approval rate on 14 applications in an average of 47 days. The program was so successful that the DOC decided to make the SOAR position permanent and hired two additional SOAR staff, making SOAR an essential part of their reentry planning for people with mental illness. Collaborations with legal systems were reported by 15 states and communities, including:

- Jail in-reach

- Collaboration with parole and probation to coordinate services

- Specialty courts and jail diversion programs

- Re-entry programs

- Training in state departments of corrections

"When I completed my site visit review for one of my Housing Providers, I interviewed a consumer in one of the Housing Programs I monitor, and she shared her successful story with me. Unfortunately, her mother passed away a year ago, and she has been struggling with homelessness, mental health, and substance use issues. She decided she wanted help with her mental health and substance use, and remembered the business card a Homeless Outreach Case Manager had given her at the shelter. She made contact and started receiving services. The Case Manager also assisted her in applying for SSI, and she got approved. She was then approved for a Transitional Housing Program and is now living independently. She is doing well, has not been actively using for a year, and is enjoying her therapy once a week to help with her depression. She also shared during the interview that she now appreciates life and wants to live life to the fullest!"

-**Tammie Vail**, SOAR State Team Lead, Oklahoma

In FY2023, 47 applicants reported to be residing in a jail or correctional facility at the time of their application had an 81 percent approval rate in an average of 109 days. Cumulatively, 688 individuals have been assisted with a pre-release applications. Of those, 71 percent were approved in an average of 100 days.

🏠 Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness

PATH and SOAR programs directly complement each other's work. The PATH program's objective to connect individuals to mental health services and stable housing is more easily accomplished when people experiencing homelessness have access to the income and health insurance that comes with Social Security disability benefits. SOAR provides PATH case workers with the tools to expedite access to SSI/SSDI, resulting in improved housing and treatment outcomes. In North Carolina, the State Team Lead worked with PATH providers and the new PATH program director to listen to provider concerns and feedback. North Carolina SOAR now hosts a bi-monthly call for its PATH providers to case conference, discuss any issues, and provide connection to otherwise isolated staff. All 50 states report collaboration with the SAMHSA PATH program, including:

- Dedicated benefits specialists on PATH teams (43 full-time, 19 part-time positions)
- SOAR training for PATH outreach and case management staff
- State PATH Contacts serve as SOAR coordinators and leaders

💡 Spotlight on Institutional Settings: Virginia's Forensic Discharge Program

In Virginia, the General Assembly extended funding for the Forensic Discharge Program (FDP), which started as a pilot project in 2020. There are now 11 programs across the Commonwealth of Virginia, with hopes to continue expanding next fiscal year. This program utilizes state funding for full-time positions, housed within local and regional jails, to do pre-release and post-discharge case management for individuals with serious mental illness. Most of these individuals are high utilizers of system resources (incarceration, hospitalization, ER visits) due to homelessness and serious mental illness. The FDPs can work with individuals up to a year before release and up to 120 days post-release. Their role includes obtaining updated psychiatric assessments, completing SSA pre-release applications, completing pre-release Medicaid applications through the Cover Virginia Incarcerated Unit, and linking individuals to housing, ACT services, and case management before release. Each FDP has its own SSA contact for its pre-release agreement to accept cases, oversee the process, and assist with problem-solving.

💡 Spotlight on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Integration: Washington, DC

The Washington, DC, Leadership Team is considering diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in SOAR more intentionally and holds a discussion during almost every SOAR provider meeting. As a result, they ask themselves and one another: "What are the gaps in our SOAR work that are or are potentially causing harm to BIPOC/queer individuals?" and "How can we address this?" Providing this intention/space created an opportunity for a Local Lead, Jaztina Somerville, to speak up about re-imagining what "screening" should and could be because she noticed the State Lead's emphasis on screening unintentionally created "screening out" bias. After discussion with the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center, they have discontinued using the word "screening" as it can cause them to screen out potential claimants and have replaced it with the idea of "always be developing referrals." They identified that this means: 1. Training referral sources on what needs to be in a SOAR referral; 2. Collecting medical records and meeting with the individual to determine how to make a case, and what you'll offer if you can't; and 3. Making a meaningful connection to the next step if you can't make the case for disability (i.e., connect them with treatment, provide a warm hand-off to supported employment, or information for applying on their own).

COST SAVINGS

➕ Medicaid/Medicare Reimbursement

Once an individual is approved for SSI and Medicaid, treatment providers can retroactively bill Medicaid for services provided up to 90 days prior to the SSI protective filing date. This results in reimbursement for previously uncompensated care and payment for ongoing treatment. In FY2023, 7 states reported **$618,246 in Medicaid reimbursement** for 111 individuals, or an average of $5,570 per person, as a result of SOAR.

Some states are participating in the Medicaid Administrative Claiming (MAC) program, which helps to defray the cost of certain administrative activities related to providing Medicaid services. Other states are working on establishing billing codes for SOAR services as part of their Medicaid State Plan.

SOAR is now a reimbursable service in the Idaho Medicaid State Plan. They have created an internal provider website for their SOAR providers, which includes a chat function and the ability to provide webinars. Four states reported receiving $26,506 in Medicare reimbursement this year for 6 individuals.

👤 General Assistance

Some communities offer a monthly cash stipend to people who are disabled and have low incomes to help cover essential living expenses while they apply for SSI. This general or interim assistance is provided while the SSI application is pending. Once approved, the state or county is reimbursed out of the individual's SSI retroactive payments. Communities can then use these funds to help support others who need assistance or to fund SOAR efforts to transition people from public assistance to SSI. In Michigan, the state

💡 Spotlight on Sustained Success: Hillsborough County (Florida) Health Care Services Department SOAR Program

Randy Vargas is the General Manager of the Health Care Services Department in Hillsborough County, Florida. He manages the SOAR program and currently oversees 7 full-time SOAR case workers. The program is funded by a ½ cent ($0.005) county sales tax. The Health Care Services Department manages the Hillsborough County Health Care Plan (HCHCP), a comprehensive managed-care program that provides quality, accessible, no-cost health care to county residents with limited income and assets. Their goal with the SOAR program is to assist HCHCP members with SSI/SSDI applications so that they can gain access to Medicaid/Medicare as well as income that will help them become more self-sufficient. Once awarded and receiving Medicaid/Medicare they are no longer in need of HCHCP services, and the savings to the county can be used to expand their HCHCP program. Randy shared, "Our SOAR program provides our most vulnerable residents with access to SSI/SSDI benefits while also bringing our county significant savings."

The SOAR program in Hillsborough County has been in operation for over 6 years and has maintained an overall approval rate of 86 percent. They have also built strong partnerships and collaborations with other agencies in the community providing services for those experiencing and at risk of homelessness, including the Salvation Army, Tampa Family Health Centers, Cove Behavioral Health, Agency for Community Treatment Services, Inc., and Gracepoint Wellness, a behavioral health solutions provider where staff works with the Crisis Stabilization Unit, The Coffee Shop (a respite outreach and engagement center), and Forensic Services.

In total, they have over 60 agencies and programs that refer individuals to their SOAR program. One partnership Randy is particularly proud of is their work with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Department. They work with the county jails and Behavioral Resources Unit, completing pre-release applications for individuals identified through proactive and reactive methods.

team works with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services benefits staff, and SOAR is mentioned in benefits applications on the Michigan Bridges website as a resource.

Twelve states reported a **total General Assistance reimbursement of $157,377** for 43 individuals, an average of **$3,660 per person**.

MORE INFORMATION

For more more information about SOAR or the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center, visit soarworks. samhsa.gov or email soar@prainc.com.

"SOAR has had a tremendous impact on our community, so I am happy to share with the hope that it will inspire others to start or expand their SOAR programs. It has been amazing seeing firsthand the life-changing impact that access to SSI/SSDI benefits has had on our most vulnerable populations."

-**Randy Vargas, MSW,** General Manager II, Health Care Services Department, Hillsborough County, Florida

ENDNOTES

1   To be considered for inclusion in the Super Stars rankings the state must have had at least 24 decisions in FY2023 and have an approval rate at or above the national average for 2023. .

2   The SAMHSA SOAR TA Center requests voluntary submission of SOAR outcomes from states annually from July 1 through June 30 of each year. Unless otherwise noted, these are the data reported in this issue brief.

3   SSI Annual Statistical Report, 2021. Table 70. SSA Pub. No. 13-11827. Washington, DC: SSA, September 2022

4   Hearing Office Average Processing Time Ranking Report FY 2023 (For Reporting Purposes: 10/01/2022 through 07/28/2023). https://www.ssa.gov/appeals/DataSets/05_Average_Processing_Time_Report.html

5   SAMHSA SOAR TA Center. (2021). The SOAR model: Critical components. https://soarworks.samhsa.gov/article/the-soar-model-critical-components

6   Kauff, J. F., Clary, E., Lupfer, K. S., & Fischer, P. F. (2016). An evaluation of SOAR: Implementation and outcomes of an effort to improve access to SSI and SSDI. *Psychiatric Services. 67*(10):1098-1102. https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ps.201500247

TABLE 1. FY2023 SOAR-ASSISTED INITIAL APPLICATION OUTCOMES

State	FY2023 Decisions	FY2023 Approvals	FY2023 Allowance	FY2023 Average Days	FY2023 Cumulative Decisions	FY2023 Cumulative Approvals	FY2023 Cumulative Allowance Rate
Alabama	2	2	100%	239	260	183	70%
Alaska	0	0	N/A	N/A	190	113	59%
Arizona	46	27	59%	263	465	291	63%
Arkansas	31	31	100%	80	1,327	1,117	84%
California	60	33	55%	155	6,906	3,814	55%
Colorado	58	37	64%	207	1,316	767	58%
Connecticut	30	14	47%	227	522	310	59%
Delaware	0	0	N/A	N/A	336	229	68%
District of Columbia	41	23	56%	164	698	476	68%
Florida	517	333	64%	191	8,719	5,482	63%
Georgia	157	91	58%	321	4,662	3,105	67%
Hawaii	3	2	67%	324	51	34	67%
Idaho	5	4	80%	111	274	158	58%
Illinois	132	60	45%	210	865	495	57%
Indiana	141	54	38%	108	275	124	45%
Iowa	22	20	91%	157	274	178	65%
Kansas	145	90	62%	207	1,956	1,315	67%
Kentucky	18	10	56%	168	964	619	64%
Louisiana	12	10	83%	282	451	305	68%
Maine	0	0	N/A	N/A	13	10	77%
Maryland	51	46	90%	115	1,973	1,702	86%
Massachusetts	7	5	71%	121	831	482	58%
Michigan	151	101	67%	133	3,834	2,445	64%
Minnesota	64	26	41%	168	3,199	1,893	59%
Mississippi	2	0	0%	158	303	176	58%
Missouri	111	74	67%	182	573	359	63%
Montana	24	21	88%	196	371	212	57%
Nebraska	88	55	63%	201	2,665	1,531	57%
Nevada	34	29	85%	196	1,185	809	68%
New Hampshire	2	2	100%	70	10	8	80%
New Jersey	16	15	94%	310	685	442	65%
New Mexico	58	45	78%	204	1,062	722	68%
New York	26	18	69%	288	2,475	1,464	59%
North Carolina	137	92	67%	166	3,426	2,575	75%
North Dakota	1	0	0%	92	10	7	70%
Ohio	127	93	73%	112	7,797	4,038	52%
Oklahoma	260	182	70%	90	2,671	1,942	73%
Oregon	197	128	65%	174	3,588	2,448	68%
Pennsylvania	393	327	83%	105	4,760	4,278	90%
Rhode Island	10	9	90%	146	306	231	75%
South Carolina	36	26	72%	72	591	398	67%
South Dakota	1	1	100%	238	173	140	81%
Tennessee	224	199	89%	131	3,046	2,738	90%
Texas	239	103	43%	187	2,141	1,030	48%
Utah	1	0	0%	33	3,899	1,863	48%
Vermont	2	2	100%	119	28	18	64%
Virginia	127	97	76%	161	2,423	1,753	72%
Washington	30	12	40%	219	567	388	68%
West Virginia	3	1	33%	272	127	91	72%
Wisconsin	44	25	57%	265	1,508	894	59%
Wyoming	32	29	91%	203	372	279	75%
Totals	**3,918**	**2,604**	**66%**	**167**	**87,123**	**56,481**	**65%**

TABLE 2. FY2023 SOAR-ASSISTED APPEALS COMBINED

State	FY2023 Appeals Decisions	FY2023 Appeals Approvals	FY2023 Appeals Allowance	FY2023 Appeals Average Days	FY2023 Cumulative Decisions	FY2023 Cumulative Approvals	FY2023 Cumulative Allowance Rate
Alabama	0	0	N/A	N/A	25	20	80%
Alaska	1	0	0%	486	28	9	32%
Arizona	7	3	43%	219	95	48	51%
Arkansas	0	0	N/A	N/A	315	248	79%
California	14	5	36%	216	1,260	718	57%
Colorado	14	3	21%	177	168	113	67%
Connecticut	20	7	35%	175	195	76	39%
Delaware	0	0	N/A	N/A	5	3	60%
District of Columbia	9	4	44%	138	170	85	50%
Florida	98	51	52%	197	1,668	800	48%
Georgia	17	10	59%	348	906	464	51%
Hawaii	2	0	0%	10	9	7	78%
Idaho	2	2	100%	760	105	40	38%
Illinois	54	19	35%	201	317	133	42%
Indiana	45	9	20%	100	88	23	26%
Iowa	3	3	100%	150	123	65	53%
Kansas	38	13	34%	168	526	262	50%
Kentucky	1	0	0%	78	253	140	55%
Louisiana	10	9	90%	379	170	107	63%
Maine	0	0	N/A	N/A	1	1	100%
Maryland	4	2	50%	138	318	243	76%
Massachusetts	7	3	43%	318	88	44	50%
Michigan	26	9	35%	184	810	537	66%
Minnesota	20	4	20%	103	1,067	370	35%
Mississippi	0	0	N/A	N/A	26	12	46%
Missouri	6	5	83%	90	50	36	72%
Montana	0	0	N/A	N/A	81	48	59%
Nebraska	14	6	43%	185	811	298	37%
Nevada	4	3	75%	216	365	220	60%
New Hampshire	0	0	N/A	N/A	0	0	N/A
New Jersey	10	8	80%	509	258	174	67%
New Mexico	21	15	71%	296	274	172	63%
New York	8	4	50%	372	600	330	55%
North Carolina	18	6	33%	150	867	563	65%
North Dakota	1	1	100%	53	2	2	100%
Ohio	10	0	0%	133	241	73	30%
Oklahoma	35	29	83%	270	216	162	75%
Oregon	75	31	41%	179	1,262	564	45%
Pennsylvania	18	2	11%	185	217	93	43%
Rhode Island	1	0	0%	91	187	111	59%
South Carolina	2	0	0%	108	123	58	47%
South Dakota	0	0	N/A	N/A	18	14	78%
Tennessee	9	4	44%	129	121	74	61%
Texas	69	22	32%	153	653	232	36%
Utah	0	0	N/A	N/A	1,618	509	31%
Vermont	0	0	N/A	N/A	9	5	56%
Virginia	29	19	66%	134	532	312	59%
Washington	6	2	33%	166	48	19	40%
West Virginia	2	0	0%	213	88	25	28%
Wisconsin	31	9	29%	276	481	217	45%
Wyoming	2	2	100%	261	32	12	38%
Totals	**763**	**324**	**42%**	**196**	**17,890**	**8,891**	**50%**

TABLE 3. FY2023 SOAR-ASSISTED RECONSIDERATIONS

State	FY2023 Reconsideration Decisions	FY2023 Reconsideration Approvals	FY2023 Reconsideration Allowance Rate	FY2023 Reconsideration Average Days
Alabama	0	0	N/A	N/A
Alaska	1	0	0%	486
Arizona	7	3	43%	219
Arkansas	0	0	N/A	N/A
California	11	4	36%	116
Colorado	14	3	21%	177
Connecticut	13	4	31%	130
Delaware	0	0	N/A	N/A
District of Columbia	9	4	44%	138
Florida	80	37	46%	177
Georgia	13	7	54%	260
Hawaii	2	0	0%	10
Idaho	0	0	N/A	N/A
Illinois	41	10	24%	156
Indiana	1	0	0%	57
Iowa	3	3	100%	150
Kansas	31	9	29%	142
Kentucky	1	0	0%	78
Louisiana	6	5	83%	370
Maine	0	0	N/A	N/A
Maryland	4	2	50%	138
Massachusetts	4	1	25%	239
Michigan	23	6	26%	146
Minnesota	18	4	22%	91
Mississippi	0	0	N/A	N/A
Missouri	6	5	83%	90
Montana	0	0	N/A	N/A
Nebraska	14	6	43%	185
Nevada	3	3	100%	231
New Hampshire	0	0	N/A	N/A
New Jersey	1	0	0%	270
New Mexico	16	11	69%	286
New York	5	3	60%	233
North Carolina	16	4	25%	132
North Dakota	1	1	100%	53
Ohio	10	0	0%	133
Oklahoma*	1	1	100%	N/A
Oregon*	0	0	N/A	N/A
Pennsylvania	18	2	11%	185
Rhode Island	1	0	0%	91
South Carolina	2	0	0%	108
South Dakota	0	0	N/A	N/A
Tennessee	9	4	44%	129
Texas	59	12	20%	155
Utah	0	0	N/A	N/A
Vermont	0	0	N/A	N/A
Virginia	24	14	58%	116
Washington	5	1	20%	129
West Virginia	2	0	0%	213
Wisconsin	22	2	9%	242
Wyoming	2	2	100%	261
Totals	499	173	35%	167

*These states do not track outcomes in OAT so were unable to report their appeals separately.

TABLE 4. FY2023 SOAR-ASSISTED ALJ HEARINGS

State	FY2023 ALJ Hearing Decisions	FY2023 ALJ Hearing Approvals	FY2023 ALJ Hearing Allowance Rate	FY2023 ALJ Hearing Average Days
Alabama	0	0	N/A	N/A
Alaska	0	0	N/A	N/A
Arizona	0	0	N/A	N/A
Arkansas	0	0	N/A	N/A
California	3	1	33%	581
Colorado	0	0	N/A	N/A
Connecticut	7	3	43%	257
Delaware	0	0	N/A	N/A
District of Columbia	0	0	N/A	N/A
Florida	18	14	78%	286
Georgia	4	3	75%	632
Hawaii	0	0	N/A	N/A
Idaho	2	2	100%	760
Illinois	13	9	69%	345
Indiana	0	0	N/A	N/A
Iowa	0	0	N/A	N/A
Kansas	7	4	57%	284
Kentucky	0	0	N/A	N/A
Louisiana	4	4	100%	392
Maine	0	0	N/A	N/A
Maryland	0	0	N/A	N/A
Massachusetts	3	2	67%	423
Michigan	3	3	100%	474
Minnesota	2	0	0%	213
Mississippi	0	0	N/A	N/A
Missouri	0	0	N/A	N/A
Montana	0	0	N/A	N/A
Nebraska	0	0	N/A	N/A
Nevada	1	0	0%	172
New Hampshire	0	0	N/A	N/A
New Jersey	2	2	100%	628
New Mexico	5	4	80%	327
New York	3	1	33%	604
North Carolina	2	2	100%	302
North Dakota	0	0	N/A	N/A
Ohio	0	0	N/A	N/A
Oklahoma*	0	0	N/A	N/A
Oregon*	0	0	N/A	N/A
Pennsylvania	0	0	N/A	N/A
Rhode Island	0	0	N/A	N/A
South Carolina	0	0	N/A	N/A
South Dakota	0	0	N/A	N/A
Tennessee	0	0	N/A	N/A
Texas	10	10	100%	145
Utah	0	0	N/A	N/A
Vermont	0	0	N/A	N/A
Virginia	5	5	100%	223
Washington	1	1	100%	349
West Virginia	0	0	N/A	N/A
Wisconsin	9	7	78%	357
Wyoming	0	0	N/A	N/A
Totals	**104**	**77**	**74%**	**341**

*These states do not track outcomes in OAT so were unable to report their appeals separately.