



SOAR WORKS

SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery for American Indian and Alaska Native Communities

APPLYING FOR DISABILITY BENEFITS

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) are disability income benefits administered by the Social Security Administration (SSA) that also provide Medicaid and/or Medicare health insurance to eligible children and adults. The application process for SSI/SSDI is complicated and difficult to navigate. Nationally, about 30 percent of adults who apply for these benefits are approved on initial application, and appeals take an average of over 1.5 years to complete.

For American Indians and Alaska Natives who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness or who are returning to the community from institutions (jails, prisons, or hospitals), access to these programs can be extremely challenging. The approval rate on initial application for people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and who have no one to assist them is about 10-15 percent. For those who have a serious mental illness, substance use issues, or co-occurring disorders that impair cognition, the application process is even more difficult – yet accessing these benefits is often a critical first step in building resiliency and supporting recovery.

HOW SOAR CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) developed the SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) model to address this critical need. Community service providers that are SOAR-trained submit complete and quality applications that are approved quickly. By maximizing income supports through benefits access and employment support, individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness can achieve housing stability. The SAMHSA SOAR TA Center provides a three-step approach to SOAR implementation in American Indian and Alaska Native communities:



STRATEGIC PLANNING

Strategic planning meetings bring key tribal, state, and local stakeholders (e.g., tribal social services, tribal family services, Urban Indian Organizations, Indian Health Services clinics, SSA and Disability Determination Services (DDS); State Mental Health Agency and Department of Corrections leadership; and community homeless, health, behavioral health providers, youth, family, and adult peer representatives) together to collaborate and agree upon a SOAR process for the submission and processing of adult SSI/SSDI and child SSI applications and develop an action plan to implement their SOAR program.



TRAINING LEADERS

Train community service providers and case managers through the **SOAR Online Course: Adult and Child Curricula**. These free, web-based courses include the development of a practice case using a fictional applicant. A **Leadership Academy** program creates strong tribal leaders to support SOAR-trained case managers and coordinate tribal SOAR programs.



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Individualized technical assistance for supporting **action plan implementation**, identifying funding opportunities for **sustainability**, developing **quality review** procedures, and assisting with **tracking outcomes** to document success and identify areas for improvement and expansion.

THE IMPACT



Since 2006, over **43,486** initial SOAR SSI/SSDI applications have been approved.



The 2019 approval rate on initial SOAR applications averages **63 percent** in **108 days**.



In 2019 alone, SSI/SSDI brought at least **\$463 million** into the economies of the participating localities.

SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration