



SOAR and Appointed Representative Services (ARS)

SOAR-trained caseworkers are encouraged to register for the Social Security Administration's Appointment Representative Services (ARS). ARS is "an application that allows appointed representatives to view electronic folder (eFolder) documents in real-time, to download eFolder contents including multimedia files, and upload medical evidence and other documents directly into a claimant's eFolder. Representatives may also download status reports with key information regarding their pending and recently closed cases."

Representatives who assist with ALJ hearings or Appeals Council level cases and are eligible for direct payment are mandated to enroll in ARS. However, non-attorneys who are ineligible for direct payment of fees (like SOAR caseworkers) can also enroll.

Even if you only assist with initial applications, there are still benefits to enrolling in ARS. Once registered and assigned an Appointed Representative ID, SSA can more easily associate you with each new claimant you represent. When you include your Representative ID on the SSA-1696, SSA will have a streamlined process to add you to the claim in their electronic system. This will help ensure that you get copies of communications sent to the applicant and that DDS can see that you are the appointed representative on the claim.

February Spotlight: Black History Month

Dr. Kilolo Kijakazi, Former Acting Commissioner of the Social Security Administration

This Black History Month, please join the SAMHSA SOAR Technical Assistance Center in recognizing the accomplishments of the former Acting Commissioner of the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA), Dr. Kilolo Kijakazi. SSA made strides to improve service delivery under Dr. Kijakazi's leadership. Some noted accomplishments include:

- Launching the SSA website redesign in December 2022 to offer more self-service options and increased digital services.
- Hiring nearly 8,000 SSA employees in the past year.

- Reducing the backlog of hearings to a 21-year low.
- Piloting mobile services by sending SSA employees to health facilities in remote locations and improving video service delivery in Tribal communities.
- Conducting outreach to individuals who were unrepresented for their appeals to help them prepare for hearings.
- Developing Social Security's first comprehensive Limited English Proficiency policy to help customers with little or no understanding of English access SSA's information and services.

To learn more about the contributions of African American leaders to the administration of the nation's social insurance programs, see [Recognizing African American Leaders in 2023: A Discussion by the National Academy of Social Insurance](#).

See How SOAR Works



Sharing Our Successes

Family Reunification in Florida

Traci Fuglestad, a SOAR-trained practitioner from Sulzbacher Behavioral Health Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida, submitted the following SOAR success story.

Paloma* was experiencing chronic homelessness for over ten years after being discharged from a state mental hospital. She was a fixture outside a local news station and relied on the employees to provide her with food and water. A concerned police officer linked Paloma to the SOAR program with Sulzbacher. Paloma was approved for SSI benefits, placed in permanent supportive housing, linked to behavioral health services, and provided long-term care and intensive case management services. She has remained stable for over a year since the SOAR program connected her with wraparound services. An extra bonus was once she was stable on psychiatric medication, she was reunited with her family, with whom she had been estranged for over twenty years. They immediately traveled from out of state to reunite with her and have become a considerable part of her support system!

The SOAR model is terrific at helping applicants obtain access to income, housing, and healthcare in a relatively short period of time. Often, the SOAR model helps to end homelessness and future episodes of homelessness by ensuring that long-term case management and medical services are in place after the claimants receive income and access housing.

Have a story of your own? [Submit your SOAR success!](#)

**Sharing Our Successes stories are edited for brevity and clarity. All beneficiary names have been changed to protect anonymity.*



SOAR Tip: Requesting an Applicant's Electronic Files

In this [video](#), SOAR Senior Project Associate Pam Heine shares how case workers can request an applicant's electronic files for their disability benefit application from the Social Security Administration during the appeals process. For additional information on appeals, please review Class 6 of the SOAR Online Course (Adult).

Upcoming Events



SOARing Over Lunch Conference Call

February 13, 1:00–2:00 p.m. ET

The SAMHSA SOAR TA Center holds informal monthly calls designed to help support SOAR efforts across the country. No registration required.

[Read more about SOARing Over Lunch](#)



SOAR Webinar: Strategies and Considerations for Representing Older Adults with SSI/SSDI Claims

February 27, 3:00pm-4:30pm ET

This webinar will address the growing population of older adults with disabilities who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and the specific challenges they face, including accessing SSI/SSDI benefits and other needed assistance. Participants will hear from innovative programs that serve older adults experiencing homelessness and learn about SSA rules and regulations specific to older adults. Presenters will also explain how older adults may face inequities at the intersection of age and other identities. The webinar will include a discussion with a SOAR beneficiary who will share their experience accessing Social Security benefits and other assistance.

[Register for the Webinar](#)



SOAR OAT and Outcomes Orientation

March 5, 2:00pm-3:00pm ET

Join us to learn the ins and outs of successfully reporting the outcomes of your SOAR-assisted SSI/SSDI applications. We will take you step-by-step through the process from registering for an account to entering details about the application. We will also address many common questions and discuss how you can use your outcomes to promote SOAR in your community.

[Register Here](#)

Partner Updates

Homeless and Housing Resource Center (HHRC)

HHRC will host a webinar titled: *Expanding Harm Reduction Through Increased Syringe Access* on February 28, 2:00-3:30pm ET. This webinar will discuss how health centers and other community-based organizations can expand harm reduction services by offering syringe access to participants through direct service delivery and partnership.

[Read more and register!](#)

National Institute of Medical Respite Care

Medical respite care (MRC) is defined as acute and post-acute care for people experiencing homelessness who are too ill or frail to recover from a physical illness or injury while living on the streets, but not ill enough to be in a hospital. MRC programs are guided by the Standards for Medical Respite Care Programs (the Standards) in their provision of "short-term residential care that allows people experiencing homelessness the opportunity to rest, recover, and heal in a safe environment while accessing medical care and other supportive services." Included in the Standards is the facilitation of safe transition out of medical respite care. Unfortunately, the lack of affordable housing and the complex process for accessing housing make it difficult for MRC programs to meet this need.

In response to this challenge and to support the efforts of MRC programs, the National Institute for Medical Respite Care (NIMRC) developed Housing and the Medical Respite Care Program: A Practical Guide to Navigating the Homelessness Response System. SOAR is included on the Housing Discharge Planning Checklist and the Community Resource Guide templates provided in the guide.

SOAR Jobs



- **Florida:** Directions for Living - *SOAR Benefits Specialist (Full-time)*: This is a composite position providing case management, supportive interventions, and assistance with benefit enrollment to individuals and families who are homeless. Work involves outreach, access, and recovery services to individuals experiencing homelessness and assisting them with the SSI/SSDI application for benefits. Services are provided in the community. Required to meet client-facing hours monthly.

Learn more about these positions on the [SOARWorks website](#). Do you have a job posting you would like to share with the SOAR community? Please submit it to the [SAMHSA SOAR TA Center!](#)

More From SOAR



[State Directory](#)

[Library and Tools](#)

[Contact Us](#)



The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) Technical Assistance (TA) Center is sponsored by SAMHSA, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Disclaimer: The SAMHSA SOAR Technical Assistance Center is sending this eNews with support from SAMHSA, HHS. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official view of HHS or SAMHSA.

[Manage](#) your preferences | [Opt Out](#) using TrueRemove™
Got this as a forward? [Sign up](#) to receive our future emails.
View this email [online](#).

SAMHSA 5600 Fishers Ln | Rockville, MD 20857 US

This email was sent to .
To continue receiving our emails, add us to your address book.

[Subscribe](#) to our email list.