Stabilizing Housing for Families of Children who Experience Mental Health and/or Substance Use Challenges

Part I - Understanding the Challenges Families Face and the Benefits Available to Them

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Disclaimer

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Statistics

There are approximately 1.5 million people listed as being without homes. Estimates show that this number is realistically 2 x higher.

Families experiencing homelessness are typically referred to as the hidden homeless – often “doubling up” with family or friends or staying in shelters.

Many families experiencing homelessness have needs beyond housing that have to be met in order to maintain stability.

At any given time, there are approximately 1.3 million students experiencing homelessness.
The Hidden Homeless

Living with others, or “doubling up,” carries more risk for families than living in shelters. They experience frequent moves, changes in schools, and increased worry and anxiety about overstaying their welcome.

Families with children who experience mental health issues/special needs have extremely complicated needs - over and above the issues of homelessness.

**Needs such as:**
- Mental health treatment
- Medication management
- Financial assistance
- Special Education assistance
- And many more...
I am the mother of five (three boys and two girls), now four adult children. My children and I are survivors of domestic violence. We each have our own diagnosis with varying degrees of severity. We lived in a very sweet, small home in Portland.

When we fled, we shared one room in my mother’s house between five people and two dogs! When I wasn’t working, we lived in my van in the driveway and looked for a place of our own while trying not to irritate my mother.

When we were finally settled, I had high hopes. My children, especially the younger four, displayed extreme behaviors in their youth. You might notice that I said EXTREME – extremely loud and disruptive.
Property Damage

Our neighbors complained. The landlord complained. I complained.

With extreme behaviors come extreme expenses. We were able to stay in our first apartment for eight months. My children broke the mirrored closet doors and a window, and left marks on every door. We did not get our deposit back. After that, things got consistently more expensive and difficult.

I was able to get us into our first (rental) house! I felt that we would be more successful if no one lived above us, below us, or beside us. I had it all planned! Enough bedrooms for everyone to be separate! The first and last month’s rent and the security deposit took everything I had.
People in the neighborhood hated us and they made it well-known to my children. The police were called numerous times due to their out-of-control behavior. At one point, we received an anonymous letter from an angry neighbor. They wanted to make sure we knew how much they disapproved of my kids, their behavior, and my parenting style. We all experienced bullying as a result.

**We had to move!**

Every time we moved (and it was often) the costs increased, including doubled security deposits, plus first and last month’s rent. We never received the deposits back. I became an expert at painting and repairing walls and light fixtures.
Techniques for Peers Helping Families

I’ve learned many lessons along the way and dedicated the last 10 years of my life to helping other parents and children find and keep stable housing – so they don’t have to experience what my family did.

As a Peer Support Specialist, I have worked with parents on learning new/different parenting skills, seeking mental health treatment, and learning how to navigate systems.

**Peers can educate parents about:**
- Navigating systems
- Finding resources/educational information
- Fair housing laws and discrimination
- Collaborating w/property managers and housing
- Advocacy/Empowerment
- Filing complaints/grievances
- Reasonable accommodations
- Networking
What is SOAR?

• SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR)
• A model for assisting eligible individuals to apply for Social Security Administration (SSA) disability benefits
• For individuals who are experiencing, or at risk of homelessness and have a serious mental illness, co-occurring substance use disorder, or other physical disabilities
• Sponsored by SAMHSA in collaboration with the Social Security Administration (SSA) since 2005
• All 50 states and Washington, D.C. currently participate
SSI for Children: The Basics

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

• Benefits for low-income individuals
  • Financial need is a complete picture of income, living arrangement and family resources
• Children who are disabled or blind
• Federal benefit rate is $794/month (2021)*
• Provides Medicaid in most states

*https://www.ssa.gov/ssi/text-general-ussi.htm
SSI Eligibility: Definition of Disability for Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental health or physical condition(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Diagnosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Duration</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Functional Impairment(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• SSA will determine how the child’s functional abilities compare to the functional abilities of a child of the same age who does not have physical or mental impairments.</td>
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The Social Security Administration’s Sequential Evaluation for Children

Is the child working at SGA?

- **NO**

Does the child have a severe impairment?

- **YES**
  - Does the child’s impairment(s) meet or medically equal a listing, or functionally equal the listings?
    - **YES** — Approval
    - **NO** — Denial

- **NO** — Denial

- **YES** — Denial
A Foundation for Recovery

More Than Income

• Access to health care and housing

• Increased education and employment opportunities

• Decrease in incarcerations and hospitalizations

SSI: One Brick in Foundation
What Makes SOAR Unique

SOAR-trained case workers are the heroes!
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SOAR Works!

*National SOAR outcomes as of June 30, 2020
https://soarworks.prainc.com/article/soar-outcomes-and-impact
# 2020 National Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application Type</th>
<th>Approval Rate</th>
<th>Number of Approvals</th>
<th>Average Days to Decision</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial</td>
<td>65%*</td>
<td>4,265</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeals</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>868</td>
<td>211</td>
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## Financial Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average General Assistance Reimbursement</th>
<th>Average Medicaid Reimbursement</th>
<th>Average Retroactive Back Payment</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>$3,144</td>
<td>$10,529</td>
<td>$6,821</td>
</tr>
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*As compared to a 30.8% approval rate for all SSI/SSDI applicants nationwide (SSI Annual Statistical Report, 2019. Table 70. SSA Pub. No. 13-11827. Washington, D.C.: SSA, August 2020)*
Child SSI Application Outcomes

• Various states have successfully implemented SOAR for children and youth, of those states:
  • 593 decisions, 72 percent approval rates
  • Average of 107 days to decision

*Outcomes reported in the SOAR Online Application Tracking (OAT) program
Guidance for Parents and Caregivers

- Connect with SOAR providers in your community
- Provide information about the child’s functioning (at home, school, and in the community)
- Assist with identifying medical providers and educational documentation
- Connect with family peer networks in your area

SOAR WORKS for Children

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for Children: What is it, who is it for, and how can Parents/Caregivers help?

- Understanding SSI for Children: [Link]
- Family Run Organizations: [Link]
- SOAR Directory: [Link]
- SOAR Online Course: [Link]

SOAR for Children curriculum can be accessed by going to the SOAR website and clicking on the "Children" section.

Contact SOAR: [Contact Information]
Where can your agency or group assist with the SOAR process?
Benefits of the SOAR Online Course

SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) Online Course: Child Curriculum

- Standardized training provided across all geographic areas
- SOAR Leaders can coordinate follow-up training and support
- Course is FREE, web-based, and self-guided
- 20 CEUs from National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
Practice Cases: Videos and Records

PSYCHIATRIC EVALUATION

Program Participant: Marshall G. Williams
Participant ID: 1234567
Date of Birth: 02/19/2006
Gender: Male
Ethnicity: Caucasian

Diagnosis:
314.01 Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
300.02 Generalized Anxiety Disorder
Z55.9 Academic or Educational Problem

History of Present Illness:
Marshall has a history of ADHD and anxiety and has been taking Adderall daily since

PROGRESS NOTE

Date: 10/01/2017
Resident: The Williams Family (Kimberly, Marshall and Jessica)
Case Worker: Sandy Jenkins
Location: Shelter Office

XYZ Community Shelter
Housing is Healthcare!
## Getting Involved with SOAR

- **Training:** 20 hours
- **20-40 hours per complete application**
- **SOAR Critical Components**
- **Outcome Tracking**
- **Benefit to Your Agency and the Individuals You Serve**

### Training

The SOAR Online Course trains providers to assist individuals with the Social Security disability application process. The course includes an Adult Curriculum for assisting with Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) claims for adults and a Child Curriculum for assisting with SSI claims for children.

- **The SOAR Online Course:** Adult and Child Curriculums are free and are located on the SOARWorks website [https://soarworks.prainc.com/content/soar-online-course-catalog](https://soarworks.prainc.com/content/soar-online-course-catalog).
- **Each curriculum consists of seven classes,** each of which has a series of articles, short quizzes, and a practice case component. The practice case provides an opportunity for trainees to apply what they have learned in the course by completing a sample application packet for a fictitious applicant using SOAR techniques.
- **It takes approximately 20 hours to complete each curriculum and participants can work at their own pace, starting and stopping as they wish.** However, we encourage students to complete the curriculum within 30 days to retain the information learned.
- **Upon successful completion, participants will receive 20 CEUs (continuing education units) from the National Association of Social Workers (NASW).**

Many SOAR Local Leads offer one-day SOAR Online Course Review Sessions to review key components of the curriculum, discuss local/state practices, and connect new providers to local Social Security Administration (SSA) and DDS (Disability Determination Services) offices.

### Time Commitment

We estimate that each SOAR application will take approximately 20-40 hours to complete, from initial engagement to receiving a decision on a claim. This generally occurs over the course of 60-90 days.

- The time spent on each application will vary depending on the amount of engagement that is needed as well as other variables such as the experience level of the SOAR worker. For example, engagement with an applicant who is residing in an institution may take 20 hours, while it may take longer to connect with someone who is living outside or difficult to contact.

### SOAR Critical Components

SOAR providers with higher approval rates credit their success to implementing the SOAR critical components and submitting high-quality applications. Use of these components significantly increases the
Follow Up and Next Steps

In our follow up email, within 3-5 business days, look for:

- A link to the recording of today’s presentation
- Today’s presentation slides
- Invitations to upcoming events
- Additional resources
- Ways to stay connected with us
- A letter of participation

https://www.nfstac.org  |  www.hhrctraining.org
Thank you for joining us!

We hope to see you again on October 21st for Part 2!

Please complete the SAMHSA-required Feedback Survey before you go.

You can access the survey link in the chat.