

SOAR Fundamentals

MRS. RAVEN OGLESBY MOD, MBA

SOAR STATE LEAD

COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING IN OHIO

NOVEMBER 18, 2015

Agenda

- Introduction to SOAR
- SOAR Fundamentals
- Getting Started
- Special Populations
- SSA Appeals Process
- Now What?

Introductions

- Local SOAR Lead
- Program Participants
- Please tell us:
 - Your name and work location
 - What are your plans/goals for using SOAR?
 - What do you need to learn today to get you there?

SOAR

- SOAR stands for SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery
- For people who are experiencing or at-risk of homelessness
- Sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in collaboration with SSA since 2005
- All 50 states currently participate; no direct funding provided to states

Why is SSI/SSDI Important for Individuals?

- SSA disability benefits can provide access to:
 - Income
 - Housing
 - Health Insurance
 - Treatment
 - Other supportive services
- For people with disabilities, SSI/SSDI can be a critical step towards ending homelessness and promoting recovery

Why is Access to SSI/SSDI Important for States & Localities?

- People experiencing homelessness are frequent users of expensive uncompensated health care
- Can recoup cost of this care from Medicaid for up to 90 days retroactive to date of SSI eligibility
- States and localities can recoup from SSA the cost of public assistance provided during the application process
- SSI, SSDI and Medicaid bring federal dollars into states, localities and community programs
- People can obtain an income that can then allow for more housing opportunities.

Changing Lives Since 2005

- 22,863 persons experiencing or at risk for homelessness have been approved on initial application
- 65% approval rate overall, in an average of 94 days in 2014
- Compares to 10-15 percent for unassisted applications from people who are homeless and 29 percent for all applicants
- Appeals can take a year or more; many people give up and do not appeal

Top Ten States

- Served more than 8,400 persons
- 82 percent approval rate on initial applications
- AR, KS, MD, NC, OK, OR, PA, TN, VA, WA
- Approval rates are highest in places where more SOAR critical components are implemented
- **Ohio has the potential to be in the top 10 but we need your help.**

SOAR Technical Assistance Center

- SAMHSA funds the SOAR TA Center to support states and communities
- Offers virtual and on-site technical assistance
- SOAR TA Liaisons are responsible for SOAR in multiple states

SOAR Fundamentals

The Basics

SOAR Has Broader Goals



SOAR Partners



SSA

- Social Security Administration
- Federal agency that administers SSI/SSDI
- Makes the non-medical decision



DDS

- Disability Determination Services
- State agency under contract to SSA
- Makes the medical/disability determination



Medical

- Medical/Treatment providers
- Assessments/evaluations
- Medical records



- SOAR trained case managers are actively involved every step of the process

SSI & SSDI: The Basics

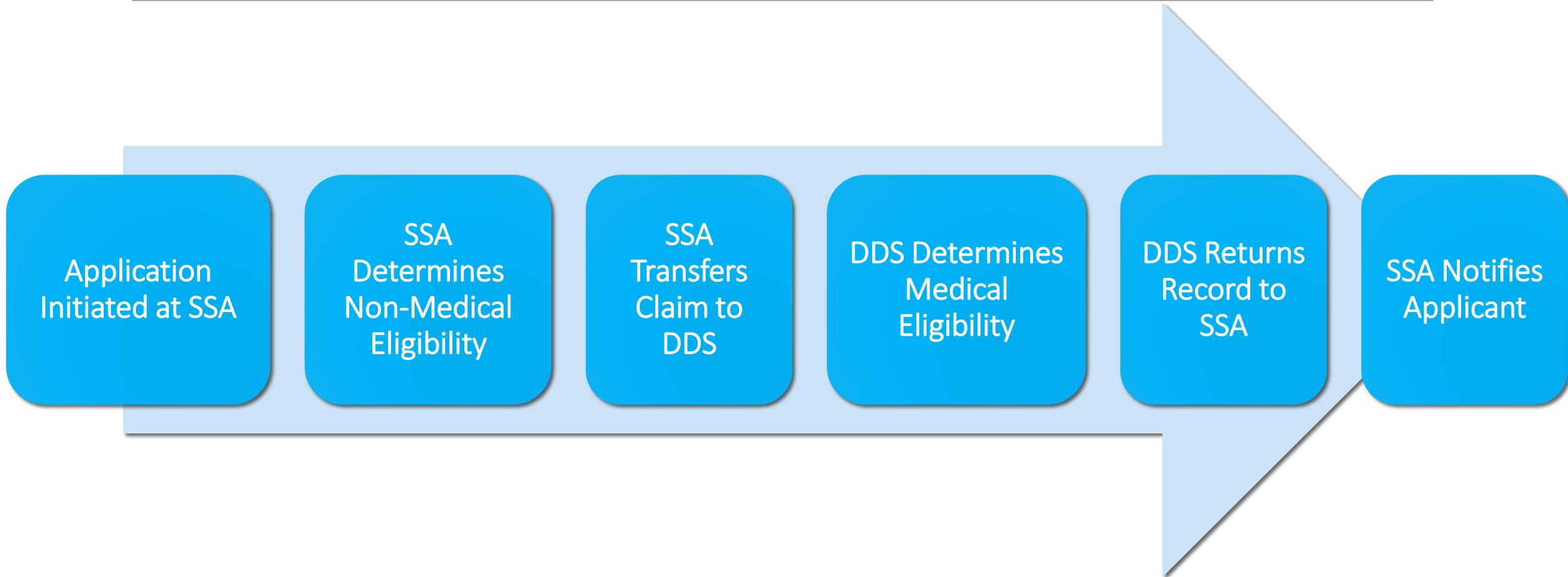
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

Needs based; federal benefit rate is \$733 per month (2015); provides Medicaid in most states

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)

Amount depends on earnings put into SSA system; Medicare generally provided after 2 years of eligibility

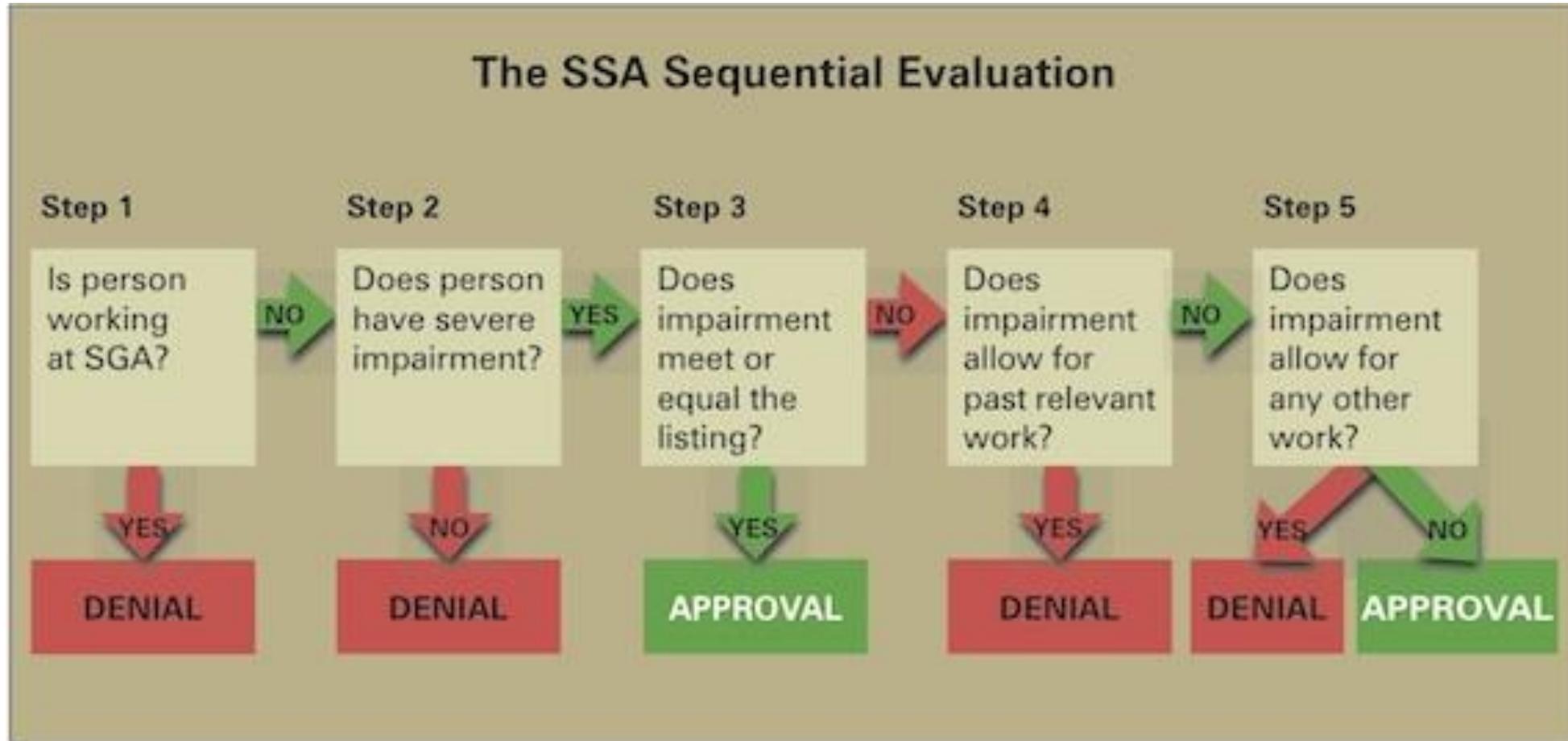
Application Process



Definition of Disability

1. Medically Determinable Physical or Mental impairment
 - Illness must either meet or be equivalent to the “listing” criteria used by DDS. Supporting information must be documented in medical records
2. Duration
 - The impairment tied to the illness(es) must have lasted OR be expected to last **12 months or more OR be expected to result in death**
3. Functional Information
 - Applicants must demonstrate that significant functional impairment related to the illness(es) exists that impede their ability to work

Sequential Evaluation



Step 3 is Key!

- Person can be found disabled at Step 3 and begin receiving benefits
- If adequate evidence is presented that impairment meets the Listings and the applicant is unable to work
- Connecting functional limitations to their inability to work with appropriate medical documentation is key

Documenting the Disability

- Case managers need to collect medical records from all treatment sources
 - Applicant report
 - Collateral sources (friends, family, other service providers)
 - Common treatment providers
- Two releases (agency and SSA-827) for each treatment source are signed so that the case manager can share these records with SSA and DDS
- Used to meet the Listings

Documenting the Disability

- If medical records are not current, case managers may need to arrange for assessments to be done
- Mental status exams must be done within 90 days of submitting application
 - DDS requires that the applicant has a diagnosis from a doctor (MD/PhD/EdD)

Make the Link to Work

- The question DDS must answer is: “Can the person work and earn SGA?”
- Disability must meet the criteria in the “Listings”
- Must make the link between a person’s illness, his/her *inability to function* in a work setting

Functional Information

- For mental illnesses, the applicant must demonstrate functional impairments that meet the Listings
- Document all four areas:
 - Activities of daily living
 - Social functioning
 - Concentration, persistence and pace
 - Repeated episodes of decompensation
- Must demonstrate marked functional impairments in at least two areas

Functional Information

- For physical impairments, the application must demonstrate significant limitations in meeting physical, mental, sensory and other requirements of work
- A limited ability to perform certain physical demands of work activity (e.g. sitting, standing, walking, lifting, carrying, etc.) may reduce a person's ability to do past work and other work
- You can help by providing information about what you have experienced when interacting with the individual.

Valuable Medical Information

- Psychiatric evaluations
- Physical health evaluations
- Specialty physical health evaluations
- Neurological reports
- Laboratory results
- Diagnostic tests
- Neuropsychological tests
- Psychological tests
- Admission summaries
- Discharge summaries

Valuable Collateral Information

- Bio-psychosocial evaluation reports
- Occupational therapy evaluation reports
- Vocational evaluation reports
- Psychiatric Rehabilitation Day Program notes
- Supported housing progress notes
- Functional evidence

Co-Occurring Disorders

- If substance use is deemed "material" to a person's disability, benefits will be denied
- Substance use is "material" when:
 - If a person were clean and sober, the functional impairment would not exist and the person would not be disabled
 - The determination does NOT require sobriety
- Use past periods of sobriety (hospital, jail, treatment) to document symptoms that persisted

Getting Started

SOAR Fundamentals

The Challenge

- Limited resources
- Limited time
- A lot of people need our help
- Applications involving mental illness and co-occurring substance use disorders are complicated

The SOAR Applicant

Who can be helped by SOAR?

- Adults who are experiencing or at risk for homelessness
- *And* who have mental illness, co-occurring disorders or other physical disabilities

Who is considered “homeless”?

- Moving from place to place throughout the month
- Living “doubled-up”
- Living in uninhabitable housing, outside or in shelters

Who is considered “at-risk for homelessness”?

- Living in unstable or non-permanent housing
- Exiting jails or prisons with no stable place to live
- Permanent housing for those recently experiencing homelessness with limited income or relying on grant funding to sustain housing
- Youth transitioning out of foster care

Identifying SOAR Applicants



Identifying SOAR Applicants

This tool is intended to help case managers identify adults who are experiencing or at risk for homelessness who may be eligible for Social Security Administration (SSA) disability benefits. While we do not want to discourage anyone from applying for SSA benefits, this tool should help you identify individuals that most need your assistance with their application.

SOAR is designed to serve individuals who are able to apply for benefits as an adult under SSA rules. This includes persons 18 years of age or older as well as individuals who are within one month (90 days for youth who are aging out of the foster care system) of their 18th birthday. Individuals age 65 or over with low income and resources may be eligible for SSI based on age or be eligible for retirement benefits based on their work history.

SOAR Fundamentals: *The following 4 characteristics represent key eligibility criteria for SSA disability benefits*

- Applicant has a serious mental illness or exhibits symptoms and/OR has serious physical illnesses that affect his/her ability to work at a substantial gainful level (\$1,070/month)
- The illness(es) or condition(s) have lasted or are expected to last for at least 12 months (or result in death)
- Individual is currently exhibiting symptoms of mental illness or has periods with worsening of symptoms that prevents sustainable employment. For example:
 - Psychotic Symptoms (positive or negative)
 - Depressive Symptoms (decreased energy, lack of motivation, suicide attempts)
 - Manic Symptoms (racing thoughts, disorganized thoughts)
 - Anxious feelings (paranoia, nervousness)
 - Cognitive deficits (brain injury; problems with concentration, memory, etc.)
 - History of trauma (history of abuse, post traumatic stress disorder, etc.)
 - Other:
- For applicants with mental illness, he/she has marked restrictions in at least 2 of these functional areas:
 - Activities of daily living (personal hygiene, cooking, cleaning, transportation, etc.)
 - Social functioning (getting along with others, anger, avoidance, etc.)
 - Concentration, persistence and pace (as they relate to the ability to complete tasks)
 - Repeated episodes of decompensation (hospitalizations, incarcerations, losing jobs/housing, etc.)

SOAR Recommends: *The following characteristics are not essential, but may strengthen an application*

- Applicant is prescribed psychiatric medications and continues to experience symptoms and functional impairments
- Applicant has obtainable medical evidence (for at least part of the past 12 months) that corroborates mental illness and medical complaints. If no medical evidence or large gaps in treatment:
 - Applicant clearly exhibiting symptoms severe enough that a one-time examination by a physician would demonstrate issues
 - Can write a medical summary report that details symptoms and functional impairments that demonstrates diagnosed disability
- Applicant is not working due to medical and/or psychiatric conditions (i.e. not because he/she cannot find work or was laid off)
 - History of failed work attempts (started and stopped employment due to diagnosed disability)
 - Long work history, but can no longer work up to SGA (\$1,070/month) due to conditions
 - Scattered work history due to conditions and other factors

Special Populations

SOAR Fundamentals

Special Populations

- Veterans
- Children
- Transition Age Youth
- Justice-Involved Persons

Importance of SSI/SSDI for Veterans

- SSA disability benefits can provide access to:
 - Income: Veterans can receive SSI/SSDI in conjunction with, or as an alternative to, VA disability benefits
 - Health insurance: Veterans can use the Medicaid and Medicare health benefits that come with SSI/SSDI to supplement VA health services
- For Veterans with disabilities, SSI/SSDI can increase income & housing stability, and reduce their future risk of homelessness
- Opportunity for staff serving Veterans to help with both SSA and VA disability benefits

Veterans and SSA Benefits

- The definition of disability and application process is different for VA and SSA benefits
 - Discharge status is not a factor in SSI/SSDI determination
 - Disabling condition does not need to be related to military service
 - Those denied for VA benefits may still be eligible for SSI/SSDI
 - Veterans can access SSA benefits while they are waiting for VA benefits
 - There is no partial disability with Social Security

SSA Fast Track Programs: Veterans

100% Permanent and Total Veterans Initiative

- Expedites SSI/SSDI applications from Veterans who have 100% P&T rating from the VA
- Does not guarantee SSI/SSDI approval

Wounded Warriors

- Veterans who received disabling mental or physical health injuries while on active duty on or after October 1, 2001
- The injury does not need to have occurred during combat operations

Transition Age Youth

- Often categorized as ages 18 – 24
- Due to a lack of extensive work history, other sources become very important:
 - School records
 - Collateral sources
 - Comparison to average youth (developmental and decision making abilities)
- Age 18 Redetermination
 - Young adults who were eligible for SSI as a child will be evaluated to determine if they qualify under the adult definition of disability
- Youth aging out of foster care
 - SSA will accept an application 90 days prior to their exit from care

Justice – Involved Persons

- Warrants (other than escape) should not hinder a person from applying or receiving payment
- A person can apply for benefits while incarcerated
- Prior history of incarceration alone does not make someone eligible for benefits

SSA Appeals Process

SOAR Fundamentals

SSA Appeals Process

1. Initial determination
2. Reconsideration
3. Administrative Hearing
4. Appeals Council Review
5. Federal Court Review



Appeal Online

<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pgm/appeal.html>



Social Security
Official Social Security Website

Accessibility · Español · Contact Us · FAQs · Sign In

Search...

Home Numbers & Cards Benefits Information for... Business & Government Our Agency

Appeal A Decision

Recent Medical Decisions

If you recently applied for Social Security disability benefits or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and were denied for medical reasons, you may request an appeal online using our Internet Appeal application.

[Appeal Our Recent Medical Decision](#)

[Continue an Appeal You Already Started](#)

Other Decisions

If you want to appeal any other kind of Social Security decision, you can call our toll-free number **1-800-772-1213** (TTY **1-800-325-0778**) or contact your local Social Security office.

Publications

[The Appeals Process](#)

[Your Right To Question The Decision Made On Your Claim](#)

[Your Right To Question A Decision Made On Your Supplemental Security Income \(SSI\) Claim](#)

[Your Right To An Administrative Law Judge Hearing And Appeals Council Review Of Your Social Security Case](#)

[Your Right To Representation](#)

Reconsideration

- First level of appeal in most states, except for these areas:
 - Alabama, Alaska, California (Los Angeles North & WB), Colorado, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, New Hampshire, New York, & Pennsylvania
- Request for Reconsideration needed to initiate the appeals process
- Must be filed within 60 days of the date of the denial notice, plus an extra 5 days for mailing
- Three forms to file:
 - Request for Reconsideration
 - Disability Report - Appeal
 - Authorization to Disclose Information
- All may be obtained and filed online at www.ssa.gov

Reconsideration

- DDS takes an entirely new look at the case and makes a new determination on a person's disability
 - New disability examiner/analyst and new reviewing physician
- Many ways to support a claim at this stage:
 - Complete more detailed Disability Report - Appeal
 - Revisit the steps in the SOAR model to develop the claim for Reconsideration

What To Do If the Deadline Has Passed?

- The applicant can appeal if he/she has “Good Cause” for missing the deadline
- Ask SSA to accept late filing by giving “good cause” or reason for the delay
 - Related to applicant’s disability
 - Limited english proficiency and/or education
 - Failure to understand the requirements
 - Failure to receive denial notice within 5 days of the date on the notice
 - Unusual or unavoidable circumstances such as hospitalization

Appeal vs. New Application

- Starting a new application results in:
 - The loss of the earlier protective filing date and potential loss of months of back benefits
- Requesting reconsideration:
 - Preserves the protective filing date and potential eligibility for months of back benefits
- Be sure the applicant knows the difference and is making an informed choice!

Administrative Hearing

- Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) Hearing
- If denied at Reconsideration or you are in a prototype state
- File appeal online within 60 days of decision
- Review the claim, including the evidence used to deny the claim
- Submit new evidence if applicable
- Plan to attend the hearing

On the Record (OTR) Review

- A written request asking that the ALJ to make a favorable decision based on the evidence in the case record
- You are requesting a decision based on new evidence that has become available since the DDS denial
- Can be requested by the claimant or SOAR representative but is often done through a screening process by the ODAR Attorney Adjudicators in an effort to clear hearing backlogs

Now What?

SOAR Fundamentals

Our State or Local SOAR Process

- The SSI Ohio Project at COHHIO serves as the SOAR program in Ohio.
- Every year a funding process occurs, agencies are selected and SSI Ohio Project Specialists are trained and hired to work throughout the community to assist individuals that are homeless, at risk of becoming homeless and/or preparing to exit an institution and disabled with applying for SSI/SSDI benefits. Through this process Specialists may also assist with benefits offered by ODJFS and refer clients to housing upon SSI/SSDI approval.
- SOAR does not provide any funding to states to do SOAR work.
- COHHIO has very strong partnerships with SSA and DDD that allow SSI Ohio Specialists to work within the infrastructure that has been built.
- If an agency is not apart of the SSI Ohio Project there may be opportunities that arise from time to time for strategically identified agencies and key staff to become SOAR trained. After completing a 4day training they may begin submitting cases using the infrastructure that has been built. These SOAR trained staff will receive additional support, training and TA to ensure that they are successful. The identified agency must sign an MOU and the SOAR trained staff must complete 8 cases per year and provide data on each case.

Next Steps

- Reach out to your local SSI Ohio Project Specialist(s) and begin making referrals and collaborate to provide detailed information on the potential client.
- Talk with the staff at your agency about how to incorporate SSI/SSDI assistance into their tool box of services.
- Collaborate with your Continuum of Care and/or Balance of State and ensure that SSI/SSDI services are utilized as part of Coordinated Entry.
- **CABHI-** For agencies that will hire a SSI Ohio Specialist- Once the new staff is hired to be a FT SSI Ohio Specialist inform Deb Givens so that the new hire can be trained and begin working as a SSI Ohio Specialist (7-9 cases submitted per month).
- **PATH-** Determine if SOAR training is needed for a designated PATH team member, provide feedback to Deb Givens, and complete SOAR MOU(8 applications completed each year).

Your State SOAR Team

Mrs. Raven Oglesby MOD, MBA

SSI Ohio Project Manager

SOAR State Lead

Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio

175 S Third Street Suite 250

Columbus, Ohio 43215

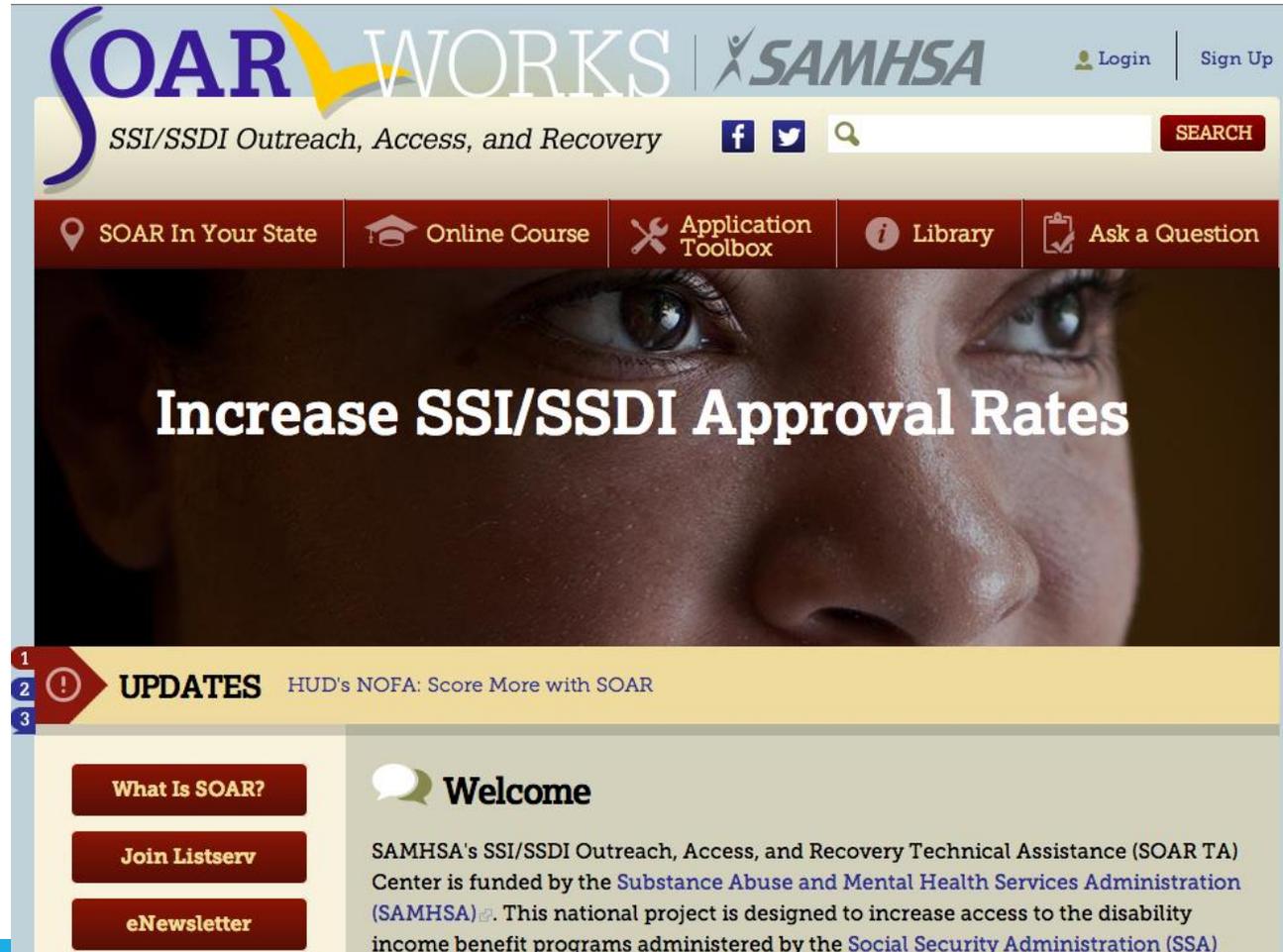
614-280-1984 ext.28

614-463-1060 fax

ravenoglesby@cohhio.org

Visit the SOAR Website Often!

<https://soarworks.prainc.com>



The screenshot shows the SOAR WORKS website interface. At the top left is the SOAR WORKS logo, followed by the SAMHSA logo. To the right are links for 'Login' and 'Sign Up'. Below the logo is the tagline 'SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery' and social media icons for Facebook and Twitter. A search bar with a 'SEARCH' button is also present. A navigation menu includes 'SOAR In Your State', 'Online Course', 'Application Toolbox', 'Library', and 'Ask a Question'. The main banner features a close-up of a person's eyes and the text 'Increase SSI/SSDI Approval Rates'. Below the banner is an 'UPDATES' section with a red arrow icon and the text 'HUD's NOFA: Score More with SOAR'. On the left side, there are three buttons: 'What Is SOAR?', 'Join Listserv', and 'eNewsletter'. On the right side, there is a 'Welcome' section with a speech bubble icon and a paragraph of text: 'SAMHSA's SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery Technical Assistance (SOAR TA) Center is funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). This national project is designed to increase access to the disability income benefit programs administered by the Social Security Administration (SSA)'.