



2019

# Introducing SOAR for Children SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)  
SOAR Technical Assistance (TA) Center  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



# Disclaimer

*The views, opinions, and content expressed in this presentation do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, or policies of the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).*

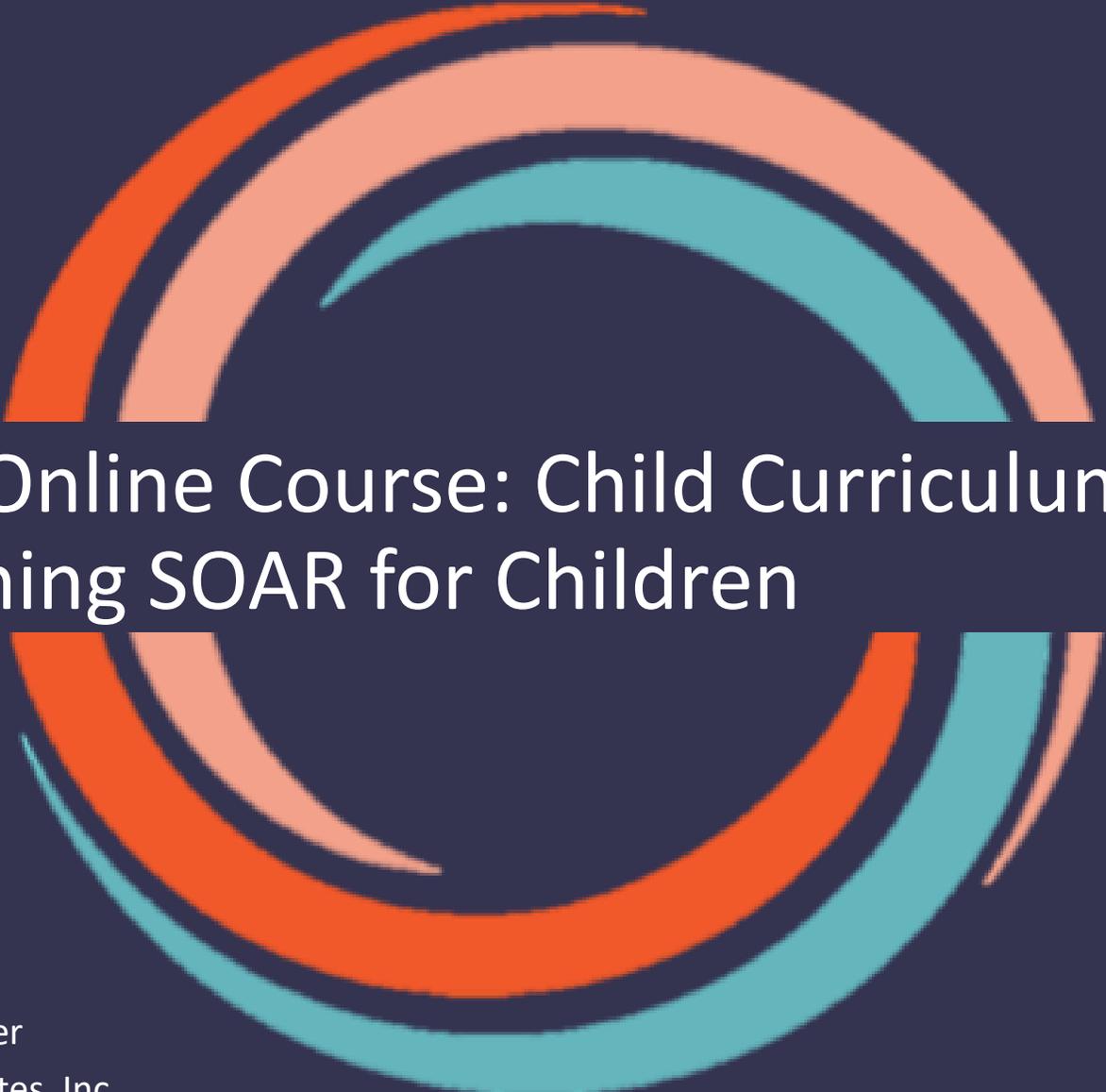


# Purpose and Objectives

- Share goals and objectives of the SOAR Online Course: Child Curriculum
- Learn how to integrate SOAR for Children into your programs
- Connect with your local SOAR contacts

The logo for the National Wraparound Implementation Academy is a circular emblem. It features a white center with the text "National Wraparound Implementation Academy" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Surrounding the center are several concentric, overlapping rings in shades of teal, orange, and light peach, creating a dynamic, swirling effect.

**National  
Wraparound  
Implementation  
Academy**

A large, stylized graphic on the right side of the slide. It consists of several concentric, overlapping rings in shades of orange, teal, and light peach, similar to the logo but larger and more abstract. The rings are slightly offset from each other, creating a sense of depth and movement.

# The SOAR Online Course: Child Curriculum and Launching SOAR for Children

- Kristin Lupfer
- Project Director
- SAMHSA SOAR TA Center
- Policy Research Associates, Inc.

# What is SOAR?

- A model for assisting eligible adults and children 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, DC currently participate





# SOAR Timeline

- SOAR training and process originally developed for adult SSI/SSDI applications in 2005
- Child SSI Issue Brief released in 2014
- Discussions about SOAR for Children with the SAMHSA Child, Adolescent, and Family Branch begin in Spring 2017
- SOAR for Children Expert Panel is held in September 2017
- SOAR Online Course: Child Curriculum launched on October 31, 2018



# Why SOAR for Children?

- Children and youth experiencing homelessness have higher rates of disability and experience higher rates of mental health problems, developmental delays, and poor cognitive outcomes than their stably housed peers.
- There were 56,342 families with children (representing 180,413 individual adults and children) experiencing homelessness in 2018.
- There were 36,361 unaccompanied homeless youth under the age of 25 in 2018.
  - Unaccompanied homeless youth are more likely to be unsheltered (51%) than all people experiencing homelessness.

<https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2018-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

National Center for Homeless Education, UNC Greensboro (2017). Federal Data Summary School Years 2013-2014 to 2015-2016, Education for Homeless Children and Youth

The National Center on Family Homelessness (2011). The Characteristics and Needs of Families Experiencing Homelessness. Retrieved from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED535499.pdf>

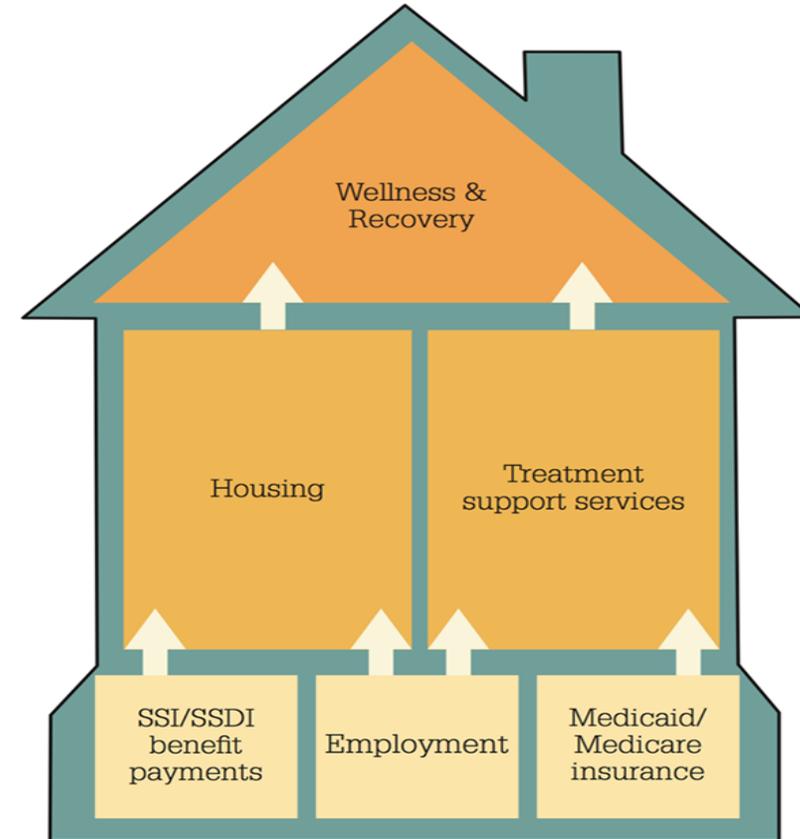
# A Foundation for Resiliency and Recovery



## More Than Income

- Access to health care and housing
- Increased education and employment opportunities
- Decrease in institutionalization and hospitalizations

## SSI: One Brick in Foundation





# 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 \$771/month (2019)\*
- Provides Medicaid in most states

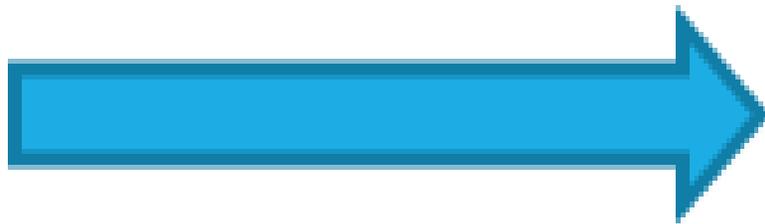
\*<https://www.ssa.gov/ssi/text-general-ussi.htm>

# SSI Eligibility: Definition of Disability for Children



## **Mental health or physical condition(s)**

- Diagnosis
- Documentation
- Duration



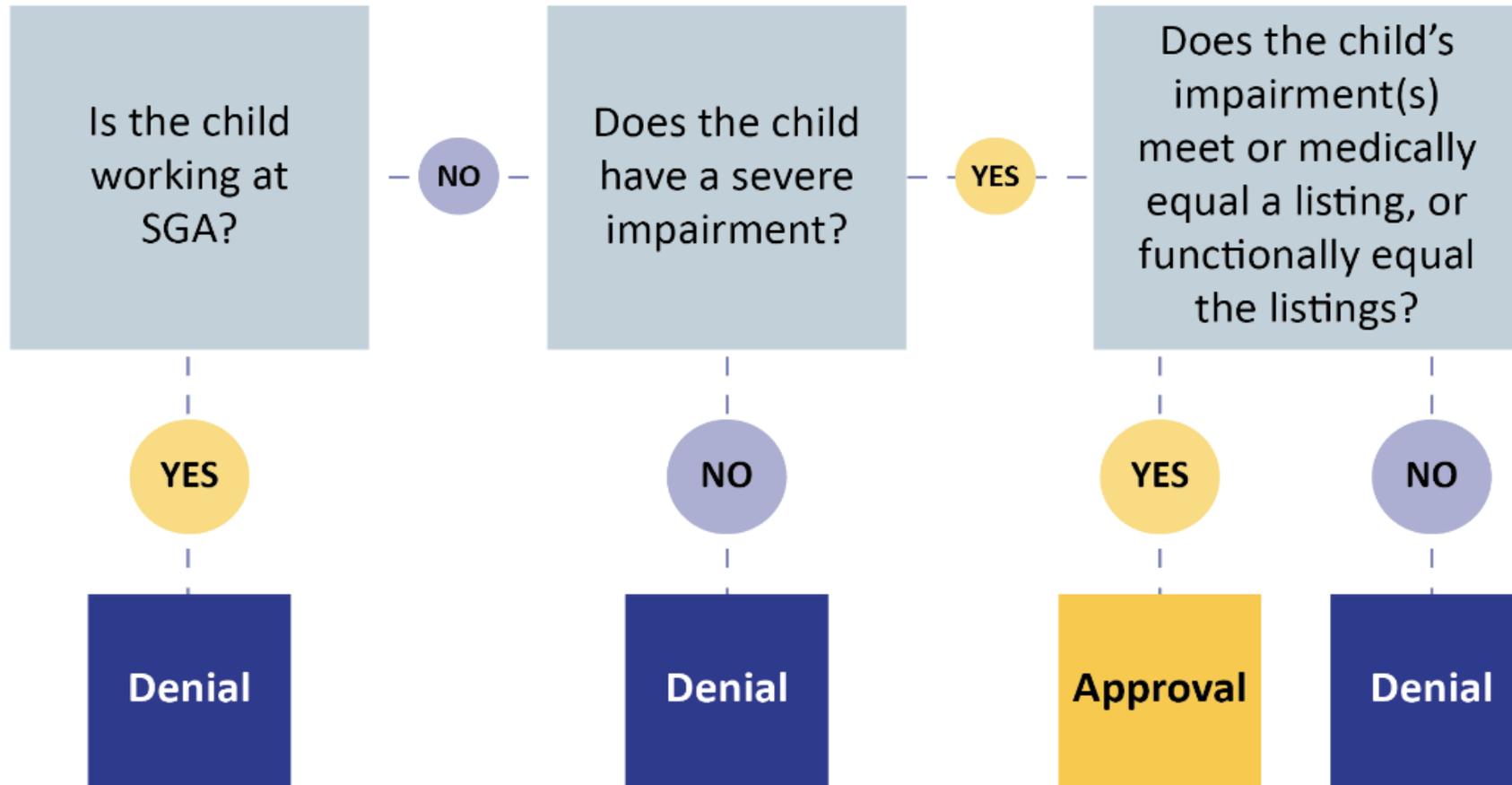
## **Functional Impairment(s)**

- 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.

# Sequential Evaluation for Children



## The Social Security Administration's Sequential Evaluation for Children



# What Makes SOAR Unique?



SOAR-trained case workers are the heroes!



# SOAR Works!



## CUMULATIVE OUTCOMES

**39,213**

cumulative initial  
approvals

**45,137**

people receiving  
benefits because  
of SOAR

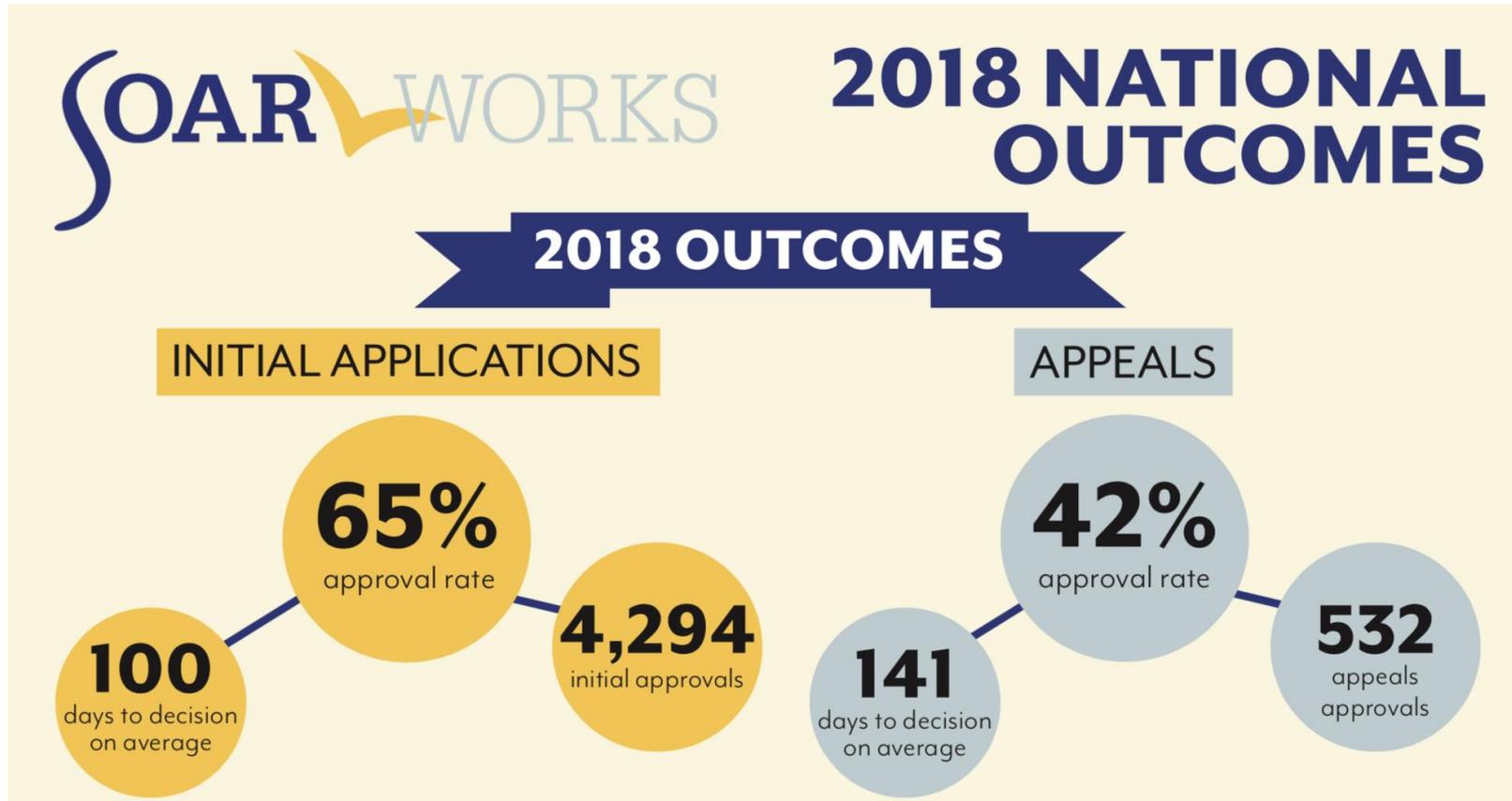
**5,924**

cumulative appeal  
approvals

\*National SOAR outcomes as of June 30, 2018

<https://soarworks.prainc.com/article/soar-outcomes-and-impact>

# 2018 National Outcomes



\*As compared to a 29% approval rate for all SSI/SSDI applicants nationwide

SSI Annual Statistical Report, 2017. Table 70. SSA Pub. No. 13-11827. Washington, D.C.: SSA, September 2018

# Child SSI Application Outcomes

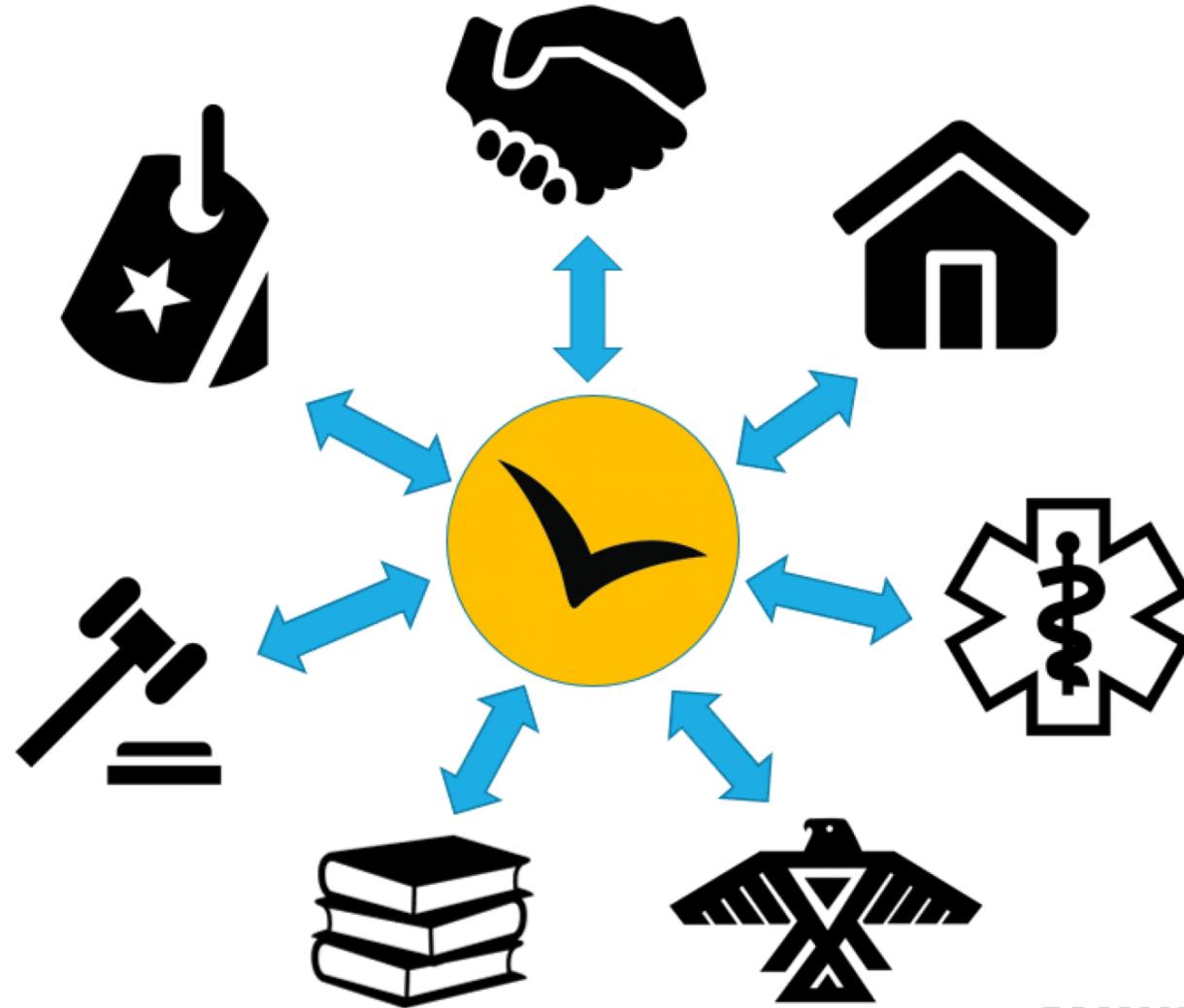


- Providers in Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Kansas, and Nevada have been implementing SOAR with children
- 401 decisions, 69 percent approval rate\*
- Average of 109 days to decision



*\*Outcomes reported in the SOAR Online Application Tracking (OAT) program*

# Community Collaboration



# SOAR Leadership Structure



## SOAR TA Center

- Facilitates strategic planning meetings
- Conducts Leadership Academies, webinars, & learning communities
- Develops resources, including SOARWorks, the SOAR Online Course, and OAT
- Provides TA at all stages of SOAR implementation

## State Team Lead

- Facilitates state steering committee
- Directs plans to grow & sustain statewide activities
- Serves as liaison to localities
- Maintains relationships with SSA & DDS
- Submits SOAR outcomes to the TA Center

## Local Lead

- Facilitates local steering committee
- Directs local implementation plans
- Facilitates SOAR Online Course cohorts
- Conducts SOAR Fundamentals trainings
- Ensures quality applications & reports outcomes

## Case Manager

- Completes high-quality SSI & SSDI applications using the SOAR model
- Communicates with local SSA & DDS representatives
- Tracks application outcomes

\*OAT: Online Application Tracking Program

\*DDS: Disability Determination Services

\*TA: Technical Assistance

# Oh, the support you will receive!



## SOAR TA Center Activities and Support



SOAR Online Course



SOAR Leadership Academy



SOAR Online Application Tracking (OAT) Program



SOARWorks Library



Individual Technical Assistance



SOARing Over Lunch



SOAR eNews



Bi-Monthly Webinars

# 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

# SOAR Online Course: Child Curriculum



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SOAR in Your State
Online Courses
OAT & Outcomes
Library & Tools
Ask a Question

Current course: SOAR Online Course: Child Curriculum

## The Need for SOAR

**Key Lessons from SuperSOAR**  
SOAR is about people, not forms. Success comes from compassion, persistence, and confidence in using SOAR and the tools it offers. You do NOT need to become an expert in SSA regulations or have all the answers.

**Key Lessons from SuperSOAR**  
The SOAR model for completing SSI applications utilizes five critical components that significantly increase the likelihood of an approval for those who are eligible.

### CLASSES IN THIS COURSE

1. **The Need for SOAR**
  - Class Home
  - 1. What is SOAR?
  - 2. SSA: What is Disability?
  - 3. Access to the SSA Disability Program: Players, Roles, and Tasks
  - 4. Steps in the SSA Disability Application Process for Children
  - 5. Disability Determination: The SSA Sequential Evaluation
  - 6. The SOAR Model: Critical Components
  - 7. The SOAR Process: Critical Components in Action
  - 8. Definitions of Homelessness
  - 9. Identifying SOAR Applicants for Children's SSI
  - 10. Social Service Systems: Child Welfare, Children's Behavioral Health and Juvenile Justice
  - 11. SOAR Values
  - 12. Try It: Key Concepts of Class 1
  - 13. Class 1 Conclusion
2. **Initiating the Application**
3. **Exploring Basic Eligibility**
4. **Medical Information**
5. **The Link to Functioning**
6. **Completing the Application Packet**
7. **Supporting Resiliency and Recovery**

**Class Overview**

*The Need for SOAR* provides an introduction to the SOAR model, its values, and the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders, especially case managers.

- Why SOAR is an important tool for case managers to use when assisting children who may be eligible for SSI
- Important community organizations and stakeholders necessary for a successful SOAR effort and the roles they play
- An overview of SSA's disability benefit program for children, SSI
- An introduction to the critical components of the SOAR model
- Key steps in SSA's disability determination process, also known as the Sequential Evaluation
- An overview of key social service systems: child welfare, children's behavioral health, and juvenile justice
- What values inform the SOAR process

Begin Class

Don't forget to work on your Practice Case at the end of each class.

### Sample SOAR Referral Application: Child

Please complete in full and fax to: **[Contact Person]** at \_\_\_

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of referral: \_\_\_\_\_

Referring agency: \_\_\_\_\_ Referring staff and title: \_\_\_\_\_

Referral contact number: \_\_\_\_\_ Referral email address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Child's Identifying Information:**

Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_ SSN: \_\_\_\_\_ Medicaid/Medical Insurance Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Race: \_\_\_\_\_ Language(s) spoken: \_\_\_\_\_

Education (last grade completed): \_\_\_\_\_ Current school: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Legal Guardian contact name and number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Part A: Address and Living Arrangement**

Address (street address, city, state, zip code, county): \_\_\_\_\_

With whom is the child living? *Check the appropriate selection*

With parent(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	With friends or other unrelated persons	<input type="checkbox"/>
With a relative who is not the child's parent	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unaccompanied (by him or herself)	<input type="checkbox"/>
With a guardian or foster parent	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Where is the child currently living? *Check the appropriate selection*

Homeless	At-Risk for Homelessness
Outdoors <input type="checkbox"/>	Doubled up/couch-surfing <input type="checkbox"/>
Shelter <input type="checkbox"/>	Received eviction notice or has substantial arrears in rent/utilities <input type="checkbox"/>
Transitional Housing <input type="checkbox"/>	Permanent supportive housing that is grant funded (Housing First placements) <input type="checkbox"/>
	Currently in or exiting foster care <input type="checkbox"/>
	Hospital/Residential Treatment/Group Home <input type="checkbox"/>
	Juvenile detention facility <input type="checkbox"/>

If the child is in a hospital, treatment, or juvenile detention facility, is he/she expected to be released within 30 days?  
 Yes  No      Was he/she experiencing homelessness before entering the facility?  Yes  No

**Part B: Current or Past Applications for SSI**

Has the child previously applied for Supplemental Security Income (SSI)?	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	If yes, date: _____
What was the decision on the application?	<input type="checkbox"/> Pending	If pending, is the child working with a lawyer? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	<input type="checkbox"/> Denied	If denied, did the child appeal? Is he/she waiting on a decision? Is he/she working with a lawyer?
	<input type="checkbox"/> Approved (previously received SSI)	If the child previously received SSI, please list the dates: _____ Why is the child no longer receiving SSI? _____

SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery (SOAR) Technical Assistance Center April 23, 2018

# Practice Cases: Videos and Records



XYZ Community Shelter  
*Housing is Healthcare!*

## PROGRESS NOTE

Date: 10/01/2017  
Resident: The Williams Family (Kimberly,  
Marshall and Jessica)

Case Worker: Sandy Jenkins  
Location: Shelter Office

Some City Youth Mental Health Center  
*Recovery is Possible!*

## PSYCHIATRIC EVALUATION

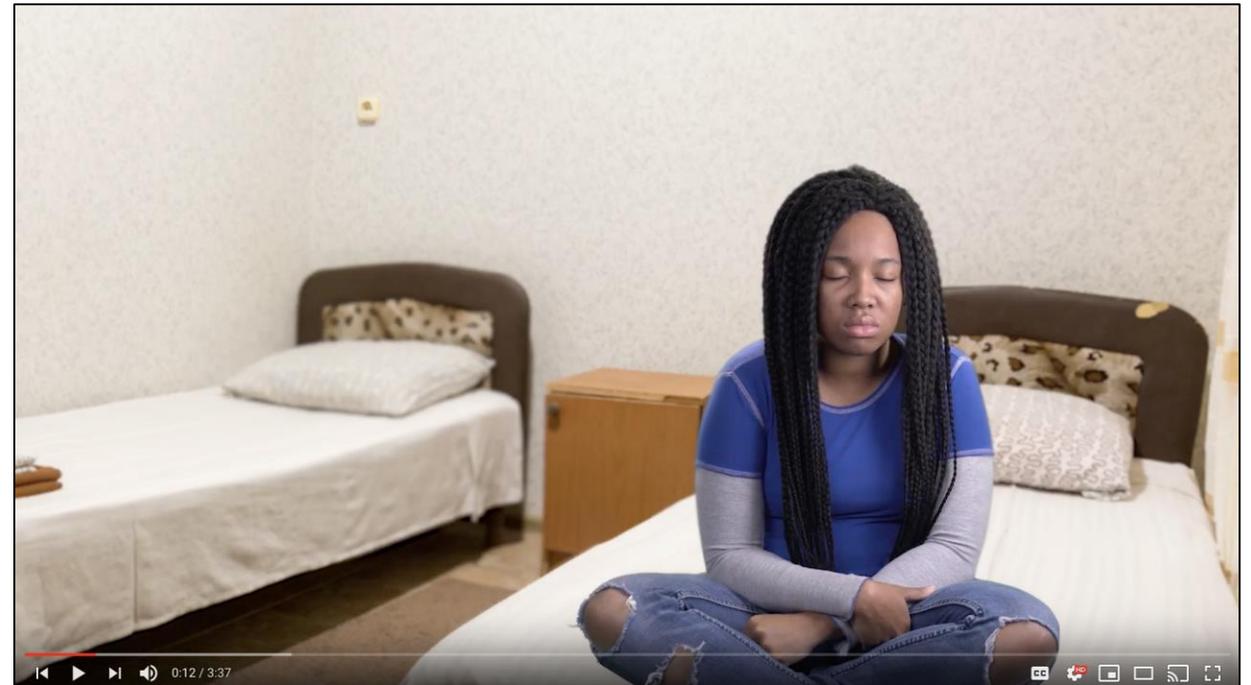
Program Participant: Marshall G. Williams  
Participant ID: 1234567  
Date of Birth: 02/19/2006  
Gender: Male  
Ethnicity: Caucasian

### 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



# Lessons Learned from SOAR for Adults



## What didn't work well:

- Rushing to training without planning for implementation
- Training a lot of people regardless of role
- Submitting applications without agreed upon processes in place
- Lacking sufficient buy-in from key stakeholders

## What worked well!

- Establishing Local Leads with in-depth knowledge of their communities
- Identifying part- and full-time dedicated benefits specialists
- Focusing on outcomes and celebrating successes
- Acting quickly to deal with issues/challenges

# Getting Involved: Time Commitment



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



## Getting Involved with SOAR

*You want to be a SOAR provider? That's great! Here's what to expect.*

SOAR promotes recovery and wellness through increased access to Social Security disability benefits for eligible individuals 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 providers assist individuals with complete and quality applications. This is not an easy task, and we want to be sure that you understand the commitment required – we believe it is well worth the effort!

### 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.prairc.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<sup>1</sup> and submitting high quality applications. Use of these components significantly increases the



# Getting Started

- Identify children and youth counterparts with existing stakeholders
  - Ask them for their contacts in each specialty area
- Organize a SOAR for Children Orientation
  - Assess current need and capacity
- Schedule a separate meeting with SSA/DDS to discuss the SOAR process for child SSI claims
- Include youth and parents on your steering committee



# Find Your Local Contacts

- Systems of Care
  - <https://www.samhsa.gov/nttac>
- Family-Run Organizations
  - [http://www.fredla.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/FRO-List-At-a-glance-2\\_2019.pdf](http://www.fredla.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/FRO-List-At-a-glance-2_2019.pdf)
- Youth MOVE National
  - <https://www.youthmovenational.org/find-a-chapter/>



# Online Application Tracking (OAT)



All the reasons  
OAT is awesome!



<https://soartrack.prainc.com>

- Web based
- User friendly
- HIPAA compliant
- Monitors quality
- Takes only 3-5 minutes
- It's FREE!

# OAT Case Worker Dashboard



**OAT WORKS**  
Online Application Tracking
Dashboard Applications Reports
Hi, Sarah Smith (Case Worker) Logout

**30** pending

**Sarah Smith (Case Worker)** #12100

Agency One • Test City • YY

Apps: 202 | Created: 05/14/2015 | Email: ssmith\_cw@agencyone.com

**My Initial Outcomes**

Approvals	Denials	Decisions	Days
<b>70%</b> 86 Approved	<b>30%</b> 37 Denied	<b>123</b> Total Initial	<b>30</b> AVG Days

**YY** Approvals: **85%** (100 Total)

**National** Approvals: **65%** (53752 Total)

**New Applicants**

Applicant ID

Example: Jane Doe, born in 1985, with a SSN of 123-45-6789. ID = ja85do6789

Create Applicant

**Monthly Snapshot**

**0**

New Apps this Month

INITIAL
RECON
ALJ
NON SOAR

**0**

Approved Apps this Month

INITIAL
RECON
ALJ
NON SOAR

Pending Apps

All Apps

**Sarah Smith - Pending Applications**

Application Type:  Export CSV

Show 10 entries Search:

ApID	PFD Date	App Date	Type	Status	Actions
an58fa2222	-	-	ALJ Hearing using SOAR	PENDING	Continue ▶
dd12ww0345	-	12/14/2016	Reconsideration using SOAR	PENDING	Continue ▶

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**National  
Wraparound  
Implementation  
Academy**

The background is a dark navy blue. On the left side, there are several overlapping circles in shades of orange, teal, and light peach. On the right side, there are large, stylized, overlapping arcs in the same color palette, resembling a partial rainbow or a series of concentric bands.

# SOAR in Maryland: A State Lead's Plan of Action

- Caroline Bolas
- Consultant/Director: SOAR Initiative  
Maryland State SOAR Lead
- Initiative of Maryland Behavioral Health  
Administration
- Catonsville, Maryland

# Overview of Maryland's SOAR Program



- Over 1,700 submitted SOAR claims since 2009
- 86% approval rate for initial claims and 77% for appeals
- Quality applications supported by use of SOAR in various ways, for example:
  - In-person trainings, SOAR Online Course completion, SOAR certification, local workgroups, state planning group, SOAR conference, dedicated DDS examiners
- Combination of funded and non-funded SOAR-trained case managers

# Key Reflections from SOAR for Children Leadership Academy



- My feelings: Daunting, but exciting!
- Opportunity to reflect on how we're currently implementing adult SOAR
- Importance of taking SOAR Online Course: Child Curriculum!
- Learning community



# Key Lessons from Adult SOAR Program

- What didn't work well:
  - Rushing to training without first undertaking preparation work
  - Training a lot of people regardless of role
  - Having providers submit applications without any agreed upon processes in place
  - Not having sufficient buy-in from key stakeholders



# Key Lessons from Adult SOAR Program

- What worked well!
  - Establishing SOAR in one area at a time
  - Having Local Leads with in-depth knowledge of their communities
  - Focusing on data and celebrating successes
  - Acting quickly to deal with issues/challenges
  - Obtaining agreement from providers on signing Medical Summary Reports (MSRs) and supplying medical records prior to starting SOAR application

# Initial Reflections on Plans for Children and SOAR



- Importance of integration with existing programs
  - Importance of quality control
  - Importance of building on existing relationships
- Potential benefits for those parents who are experiencing homelessness, but don't qualify for SSI themselves
- Increased potential for serving those at 18 who either didn't qualify for SSI or who need an age 18 redetermination
- Ability to use expertise learned over the years

# Initial Reflections on Plans for Children and SOAR



- Research!
  - Find out who are the key stakeholders
    - What is their familiarity with SOAR?
    - What will their role be in the process?
- Need and value proposition for SOAR
- Choosing possible pilot site(s)

# Initial Reflections on Plans for Children and SOAR



- Pilot
  - Identify who will take on role of Local Lead
  - Plan local stakeholder meeting and agree on who to invite
  - Create work plan
  - Have attendees participate in development of SOAR process for their pilot area
  - Obtain buy-in from Agency Directors
  - Be clear this is a pilot, and that we are learning together- SOAR Pioneers!



Questions





# Getting Started

- Assess the current need and capacity
  - Do you know how many families in your locality have children who may be eligible for SSI?
  - What resources currently exist to increase awareness of and access to SSI?
  - Is there a local SOAR for Adults Initiative that could help with capacity expansion or would you be looking for new resources?
- Introduce SOAR for Children to key stakeholders (Continuum of Care, school district, child welfare, etc.)



# Next Steps

- ✓ Learn more about SOAR
- ✓ Get in touch with your SAMHSA SOAR TA Center liaison
- ✓ Reach out to your local or state SOAR leads
- ✓ Register for the SOAR Online Course



# Additional Resources

- SOAR Works Website and Online Course: <https://soarworks.prainc.com/>
- SOAR Outcomes Tracking: <https://soartrack.prainc.com/>
- SOAR Children and Youth Resources:
  - <https://soarworks.prainc.com/article/children-and-youth-resources>
- SSA Disability Information: <https://www.ssa.gov/benefits/disability/>
- SSA Employment Supports: <https://choosework.ssa.gov/>



# Thank you!

<https://soarworks.prainc.com>

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NWIA



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