

February 6, 2014

Dear Continuum of Care Director:

On behalf of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), I am pleased to announce that we are now accepting applications from Continua of Care (CoCs) that have not participated in the federally sponsored SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery (SOAR) Technical Assistance (TA) Project.

SAMHSA's SOAR program assists states and localities to expedite access to the Social Security Administration's (SSA) disability programs -- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) -- for persons who are homeless or at risk for homelessness and who have a mental illness, a co-occurring substance use disorder or other serious medical condition. Currently, all 50 states participate in the federally sponsored SOAR program. SOAR outcomes for 2012 are attached to this letter.

We are inviting CoCs to submit a brief, 3-5 page application to participate in the SOAR TA Project. **Only one application per CoC will be accepted. The application must be from the CoC or someone designated by the CoC to respond to this RFA.** We expect that up to five (5) CoCs will be selected.

The federally sponsored SOAR TA includes four components:

- A one-day planning forum facilitated by the SOAR TA Center in conjunction with the designated local lead. At this forum, the critical components of SOAR will be described and participants will develop an action plan for establishing the community infrastructure and collaborations needed to implement the SOAR process and effect systems change. Participants include stakeholders in housing and homelessness services who will continue to meet to ensure implementation of SOAR. Planning must be coordinated with the state's existing SOAR efforts and SOAR State Team Lead.
- The SOAR local lead's attendance at a Leadership Academy where they will learn how to establish steering committees, mentor new trainees and conduct SOAR refresher trainings. There is no registration fee and travel/per diem will be covered as part of this award.
- Access to the SOAR online curriculum, assistance with planning an initial refresher training in your region, and on-going technical assistance with the implementation of SOAR.

- Access to the SOAR Online Application Tracking (OAT) system which allows training participants to electronically enter, save, and report on applications they submit to SSA using the SOAR process.

To apply, the CoC or its designee must submit a brief 3-5 page narrative describing how it will address the requirements below, as well as how participation in this project will be linked to assisting people experiencing homelessness to access permanent housing. Preference will be given to projects that collaborate with Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), Health Care for the Homeless (HCH) and HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Programs.

1. Designate a local lead who is in a leadership position and is willing to commit the time to ensure implementation of SOAR, by facilitating regular steering committee meetings, mentoring new trainees and conducting SOAR refresher trainings.
2. Describe a rationale for applying. What is the current community need and how will SOAR support your CoC?
3. Identify community-based provider agencies willing to commit staff to successfully complete the online SOAR training, assist with SSI/SSDI applications using the SOAR process, and track outcomes.
4. Describe specific strategies for conducting outcome tracking. CoCs are encouraged to utilize the SOAR Online Application Tracking (OAT) system described in the attached brochure and on the SOAR website (www.prainc.com/soar) to collect and report application results.
5. Demonstrate a CoC-wide collaborative commitment to develop and implement an action plan for increasing access to SSI/SSDI benefits, including a regular SOAR steering committee to address further implementation and issues that may arise. Attach a SOAR implementation plan using the attached template.
6. Demonstrate logistical support for SOAR meetings. Such support might include training space, publicity, registration, and ancillary materials. (The online curriculum is provided at no charge by SAMHSA.)
7. Describe how the CoC's SOAR project will coordinate with the SOAR State Team Lead, enhance the state's existing SOAR efforts, integrate the use of the state's SOAR Process (if one is in place), and deliver outcomes to the SOAR TA Center annually. Communication with the SOAR State Team Lead is strongly recommended prior to submission of an application for SOAR TA. The SOAR State Team Lead can be found at www.prainc.com/soar. Use the drop down menu on the home page to find your state's SOAR Team Lead.
8. Describe any ongoing collaborative work that is either currently linked to increasing access to SSI/SSDI or could easily incorporate such work. Include any prior collaborative work between the CoC and SSA, the state's Disability Determination Service (DDS), medical providers, and homeless service providers. Describe how SOAR can help enhance that work. The lack of prior collaborative work will not count against the application as long as there is a plan for implementing such collaboration.

The timeline for participation in this round of SOAR Technical Assistance is as follows:

- Applications for SOAR participation are due March 10, 2014
- Selection of CoCs will occur by March 28, 2014
- Series of planning calls will be held with selected CoCs by April 30, 2014
- One-day planning forum must be held by August 1, 2014
- The SOAR local lead will attend a Leadership Academy on either June 3-5, 2014 in Portland, OR, or September 10-12, 2014 in Pittsburgh, PA
- On-going technical assistance and monitoring of the implementation of your strategic plans and assistance to help you report on SOAR outcomes

Please respond by **February 21, 2014** (requested, not required) to indicate whether your CoC is interested in submitting an application to participate in SOAR. Send your response to Kristin Lupfer, Project Director, SOAR Technical Assistance Center, via e-mail at klupfer@prainc.com.

Questions about the application process or the SOAR TA Project in general should be directed to Kristin Lupfer. She can be reached by phone at (518) 439-7415, ext. 5262 or by e-mail as noted above. Applications must be submitted electronically via e-mail and are due to Ms. Lupfer via e-mail no later than 5:00 p.m. Pacific on **March 10, 2014**.

Sincerely,



Pamela Fischer, Ph.D.
Social Science Analyst
Homeless Programs Branch
Center for Mental Health Services

Attachments: SOAR Overview
2012 SOAR Outcomes- State table
Best Practices for State and Local Initiatives
State and Local Roles and Responsibilities
Local Guidelines for Action Planning
Local Action Plan Template
Sample Action Plan
Best Practices for Assisting Applicants
Memo to Program Directors Considering SOAR/SSR Training for Staff
Learning Objectives for the SOAR Online Curriculum
SOAR Online Application Tracking (OAT) system brochure

cc: State Team Leads for SOAR