

SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery

Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services

Maine Department of Health and Human Services

The Issue in Maine:

THE SSI/SSDI application process is difficult to navigate. Especially so for those who are homeless or returning to the community from incarceration or hospitalization.

Maine's rural landscape often creates distance barriers, further complicating that process.

Maine has a high percentage of aged and disabled residents per capita and resources are very limited as a result.



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Programs:

SOAR is a national project funded by The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) that is designed to increase access to the disability income benefit programs administered by the Social Security Administration for eligible adults who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and have a mental illness and/or a co-occurring substance use disorder.

Since 2006, 44 states have implemented the SOAR processing approach with 15,000 applications.

Without the SOAR approach only 15% of homeless populations have their disability application approved. With the SOAR approach the average approval ratings nationwide are over 70% in an average of 91 days. .

On October 18, 2013, a memo was released by the Department of Veterans Affairs encouraging VA employees to be trained in and utilize SOAR in their efforts to serve the at-risk and homeless Veteran population.

Program Goals:

To increase the approval rate of SSI/SSDI applications

To decrease the amount of time it takes for application approvals

To relieve case managers of the burden of appeals processing by acting as the clients official representative for SSA and by focusing on approval of the initial application through the gathering of comprehensive information and the writing of a concise and thorough medical summary report.