

SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) and Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH)

PATH and SOAR are two key programs administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) that work together to end homelessness. Both programs serve adults who have serious mental illnesses and/or co-occurring substance use disorders who are experiencing or at risk for homelessness and assist them in gaining income and housing stability.

What is the SOAR Model?

SOAR is a national program designed to increase access to Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) for eligible adults who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and have a mental illness, medical impairment, and/or a co-occurring substance use disorder.

- Since SOAR began in 2006, 59,101 people who were experiencing or at risk of homelessness were approved on their initial application using the SOAR model.
- In 2024, SOAR-trained providers across the country maintained an average approval rate of 65% for initial applications in an average of 177 days from application date to decision.

What is the PATH Program?

PATH is a formula grant to the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. There are nearly 440 local organizations that provide PATH services.

- The PATH program's objective is to connect individuals to mental health services and stable housing.
- This objective is more easily accomplished when people who are homeless have access to the income and health insurance that comes with Social Security benefits.

Working in Partnership Since 2006

PATH and SOAR programs have been working in partnership to increase access to SSA disability benefits and end homelessness for 18 years. The program goals directly complement each other, as SOAR provides PATH case managers the tools necessary to expedite access to income and health benefits, resulting in improved housing and treatment outcomes. All fifty states report collaboration with the PATH program including:

- Dedicated benefits specialists on PATH teams
- SOAR training for PATH outreach and case management staff
- PATH outreach staff serve as local SOAR coordinators and leaders
- Many SOAR State Team Leads are also the State PATH Contacts

Using PATH Funds for SOAR Leadership and Coordination

Maryland

Maryland uses PATH funding to support a statewide SOAR Director, one local SOAR lead, and three full-time dedicated SOAR benefits specialists.

- The State SOAR Director played an integral role in expanding SOAR to every county in the state by creating local SOAR steering committees and strategic plans and developing dedicated SOAR specialist positions.
- The Director continues to monitor each county's SOAR process and outcomes to ensure quality and supports dedicated SOAR local leads.
- PATH funding has been critical to Maryland's success in serving over 2,000 individuals using SOAR, with an 86 percent overall approval rate on initial applications.

Tennessee

In Tennessee, PATH funding supports three Regional SOAR Coordinators throughout the state. Additionally, all PATH staff are encouraged to become SOAR certified.

- Regional Coordinators provide technical assistance to enrollees of the SOAR Online Course; develop relationships with medical providers, DDS and SSA staff; review applications for quality; lead SOAR steering committee meetings; and collect SOAR outcomes.
- SOAR Coordinators are engaged with their region's HUD Continuum(s) of Care to ensure those working with individuals experiencing homelessness have sufficient knowledge of SOAR and encourage agencies to implement SOAR-trained staffing to their array of service delivery.
- Utilization of the SOAR model began in Nashville and has since spread across the state. SOAR programs have served 3,046 individuals with a 90 percent approval rate on initial applications.

Using PATH Funds for Dedicated SOAR Benefits Specialists

North Carolina

In North Carolina, PATH funding is leveraged annually to support dedicated SOAR benefits specialist positions. There are currently four SOAR benefits specialist positions on PATH teams.

- These specialists work in 2 different communities across the state.
- Joined by 16 other full-time and 11 part-time dedicated SOAR caseworkers in the state, North Carolina has served 3,426 individuals with a 75 percent approval rate on initial applications.

Michigan

Michigan has 9 PATH grantees who provide Street Outreach to 21 counties in the Lower Peninsula of the state. All grantees have Certified SOAR Practitioners that assist SSI/SSDI applicants using SOAR.

- 9 Grantees have a dedicated SOAR practitioner incorporated into their PATH team.
- During the State's FY2023, Michigan's PATH Teams had 42 initial SOAR-assisted claims and 4 reconsiderations adjudicated.

Michigan's PATH Providers have a 69% approval rating on initial claims demonstrating their proficiency in using the SOAR model effectively with those served. As a result, individuals assisted have been awarded a combined monthly total of \$25,097 in SSI/SSDI and \$103,588 in back pay.

Building new SOAR and PATH Partnerships

We encourage states and communities to continue to strengthen the partnership between SOAR and PATH. For more information on using SOAR in your PATH program, contact the SAMHSA SOAR Technical Assistance Center at SOAR@prainc.com or visit <https://soarworks.samhsa.gov>.