

SOAR Dialogue Highlights
6/21/12

Attendees: Emily Carmody, Aundry Freeman, Moli Jones, Elizabeth McDermott, TJ Emwanta

Introductions/Updates:

- Emily Carmody- SOAR Training held in May, SOAR Essentials Training held yesterday in Winston-Salem, and scheduling a SOAR two-day training for the end of August
- TJ Emwanta- Winston-Salem has officially formed a SOAR work group, had 1 approval and 1 presumptive decision this month
- Moli Jones- Still trying to get SOAR authorized by agency for my position, have yet to do a case but really want to be a part of these calls to be kept up to date
- Elizabeth McDermott- Several approvals this month
- Aundrey Freeman- Four approvals in Buncombe County and 3 approvals in Henderson

Announcements:

- Outcomes Needed!
 - Please send any and all outcomes to Emily for SOAR cases
 - Emily is putting together quarterly reports and the annual report for PRA in July
- IPRS Service Definition
 - A service definition for SOAR has been approved by the Department of Mental Health
 - Definition will allow LME/MCOs to be reimbursed for SOAR casework through IPRS funds
- VA and SOAR
 - PRA had a webinar about SOAR and the VA:
<http://prainc.com/SOAR/library/webinars.asp>
 - VA policy about SOAR has changed due to policy in SSA regulations
 - VA staff cannot be a 1696 Representative or advocate on the behalf of an applicant for SSI/SSDI benefits
 - VA staff CAN gather medical records and write a medical summary report for an applicant
 - Community agencies need to be aware of this policy and work to partner with SOAR-trained VA staff in your communities to partner on SOAR applications

Discussion: Community Work Groups

- What is a Community Work Group?
 - Group of key stakeholders that meet on a regular basis
 - Shelters
 - Medical facilities- hospitals, clinics
 - VA staff
 - HIV/AIDS organizations

- LME/MCO
 - Jail and recovery programs
 - Discuss issues and barriers for the SOAR process in the community
 - Develop plans to address these barriers
 - Train and educate community about SOAR and SSI/SSDI benefits
 - Benefits 101 trainings
 - Trainings for doctors about documenting disabilities
- What advice do ongoing work groups have for those who are starting up?
 - Have an email list and listserv to share information about meetings and updates
 - Meet on a regular basis and choose a time that is convenient for most people like lunch
 - Emphasize collaboration
 - Discuss referral systems
 - How partners can provide to aid cases
 - Ask NCCEH for a list of SOAR-trained caseworkers in the community and use that as a starting point
 - Involve SSA staff in meetings to develop relationships
 - Poll the group as to what is the biggest need in the community and what the group should start on
 - Know that as you begin to address one issue, the group will find other needs that they can address- it happens organically
- Community Certification Feedback
 - Community Certification through NCCEH is a great starting point for work groups
 - Helps groups to follow steps to build collaboration so it is not just one person completing the tasks
 - Creates a goal and motivation for the group so people invest more staff time and energy in SOAR
 - Drawback- communities may assume that they are at a level without actually doing the work and reporting to NCCEH
 - Email Emily with any other feedback about the Community Certification process: emily@ncceh.org

Other Questions for the Group:

- Aundrey- An applicant's benefits were reduced by our SSA office due to the applicant staying at the Rescue Mission Shelter. Have others in the state seen this?
 - TJ- The Rescue Mission in Winston-Salem charges for their services to avoid reductions in people's benefits
 - Moli- I have a person whose check was reduced because of their Shelter Plus Care voucher
 - Emily- SSA office is incorrectly reducing benefits
 - <https://secure.ssa.gov/poms.nsf/lnx/0500835060>
 - <https://secure.ssa.gov/poms.nsf/lnx/0500830630>

- Both homeless/shelter situations and Shelter Plus Care vouchers meet “Living Arrangement A”
- The applicant should receive the Full Benefit Rate for SSI

Next Call: July 19, 2012 at 10 AM