

SOAR Dialogue Highlights

9/25/14

Attendees: Emily Carmody, Jacquetta Bullock, Candice Chilton, Charlene Powell, Pamalia Davis, TJ Reynolds-Emwanta, Diamond Jenkins, Tara Jaworski

Introductions and Updates

- Emily Carmody, NCCEH, Raleigh- Events coming up in December
- TJ Reynolds-Emwanta, CenterPoint MCO- Training community partners about SOAR referrals and disability benefits, 2 approvals this month
- Charlene Powell, ECBH- no new updates, 2 pending cases
- Jacquetta Bullock, New Direction Ministries, Vance County- no updates this month
- Pamalia Davis, Housing for New Hope, Durham- 12 cases at DDS, 1 case approved at ALJ hearing after following application from the initial stage and payments will go back to August 2012
- Diamond Jenkins and Tara Jaworski, Southlight Healthcare, Raleigh- joining first call, new SOAR caseworkers for Wake County
- Candice Chilton, LATCH, Durham- 3 approvals this month

Announcement

- Next SOAR Training: December 3-4, 2014 in Greensboro
 - Please tell anyone who is interested in attending to apply for the training
 - Posted on ncceh.org on the calendar of events
- 3rd Annual SOAR Caseworker Meeting: December 9, 2014 in Winston-Salem
 - CenterPoint MCO will be hosting the group in the same room as last year
 - If you are interested in helping out with the meeting, please contact Emily Carmody
 - Emily will be reaching out to caseworkers about leading topics
 - DDS and SSA will be invited to attend
 - \$15 fee will cover food and snacks for the day
 - Can pay by credit card over our website
 - OR bring cash/check the day of the event

SOAR Referrals-

How do you know what cases to take on? How do you prioritize your referrals? What happens if you decide not to take on the case?

Information to Know For Referrals

- Homelessness- Make sure that this person would qualify as homeless according to SAMHSA's definition:
 - On the streets, shelters, in a place not meant for human habitation
 - Transitional housing program
 - Couch surfing- staying from house to house in unstable situations
 - At imminent risk of homelessness- eviction, foreclosure, etc.

- Clarification document about definition from the national SOAR program:
<http://www.prainc.com/soar/cms-assets/documents/74697-776854.homelessnessdefs081512.pdf>
- If you begin working with someone on a case who is homeless and they get housed during the application process, you can continue to work with them as a SOAR case
- If your agency is covering the rent for someone while you are doing SOAR applications, you can create a loan agreement with the application where they will pay you back for the rent and get the full benefit rate for their back pay and ongoing checks
- Discerning whether substance use is material to the disabling condition
 - Is the disability being caused primarily by the substance use?
 - Ask for latest psychiatric or medical evaluation to get more information
 - Could also look at HMIS record to see what they have reported in the past for their disabling conditions
 - May be something to continue to evaluate as you are working with them
 - Use the Co-Occurring Screen on NCCEH's website: <http://www.ncceh.org/files/241/>
- Are there multiple conditions causing disability?
 - One diagnosis may not meet listing on its own but they may have multiple, chronic illnesses that could equal a listing
 - Always good to follow up with a face to face meeting to assess what is going on with the whole person
 - Conditions that are common: arthritis, diabetes, history of head injuries
 - School records can show that issues have effected them for awhile
 - If school records have been destroyed, you may be able to find reference about education in other records
 - You can use their account of their school experience and what it was like for them
- Is the person currently working?
 - If the referred individual is working, are they earning SGA?
 - SGA = \$1,070/month gross income
 - Earning \$1,070 or above the person's application will be denied
 - If the person is working, are there special accommodations being made at work to support them?
 - This could provide examples of how their disability is affecting their functioning at work
- Open felony warrants
 - If the person has an open, felony warrant for:
 - Escape
 - Flight
 - Flight-Escape
 - If they have an open warrant for one of these 3 charges, then they will need to clear these warrants before benefits would start for them

Prioritizing Referrals

- Caseworkers use various methods for prioritizing referrals for SOAR cases
- Team approach- have your team discuss who should be taken on each month
- Use a prioritization tool
 - Many tools exist now to assess who is most vulnerable to dying on the streets
 - VI-SPDAT, Vulnerability Index, etc.
- Agencies can also use other criteria to prioritize referrals: use of emergency services, use of hospital resources, use of IPRS mental health funding, etc.

Conversation with Individuals Who Decide Not to Take on as a SOAR Case

- Be open and honest about why you are not taking on their case
 - Educate them about the listings and qualifications for the SSI/SSDI program
 - By educating people about the programs, it may help to decrease inappropriate cases
- The person can always go apply on their own
 - Make sure to explain that to them
 - May want to have a referral list of other advocates/lawyers in the community who they can talk to as well
- Provide them a referral for an employment program
 - Voc Rehab
 - Goodwill
 - Mental Health Agencies who do supported employment
 - Walmart also accommodates disabilities
 - Providing them a referral to an employment program means they have other options
 - If they do not do well in the program, then that provides you a strong record for a future application
- Make sure to have a face to face conversation about why you are not taking on the case in order to clarify information for the individual

Next SOAR Dialogue Call is on Thursday November 20th at 10 AM.

Register for the call by following this link: <http://www.ncceh.org/events/788/>