

SOAR Dialogue Highlights

4/15/15

Attendees: Emily Carmody, Candice Chilton, Lisa Carter, Pamalia Davis, Charlene Powell, Jacquetta Bullock, Tracy Miller, Faye Pierce, TJ Reynolds-Emwanta

Introductions and Updates

- Emily Carmody, NCCEH, Raleigh- Looking to schedule our next training in June, if people are interested in attending email Emily to be added to a list to be notified once it is scheduled
- Candice Chilton, LATCH, Durham with intern Charlie Harliss- No new updates, continuing cases, new staff is starting in Henderson
- Lisa Carter, CenterPoint Human Services, Winston-Salem – 1st approval this morning, one case at DDS, working on another case as well
- Pamalia Davis and Christopher Rawlinson, Housing for New Hope, Durham- 2 approvals, 5 pending cases, 1 at hearing level, new staff trained at Housing for New Hope
- Charlene Powell, ECBH MCO- coming back after medical leave
- Jacquetta Bullock, New Direction Ministries, Vance County- no new updates
- Tracy Miller, Cumberland County PATH Team, Fayetteville – 1 denial and the applicant is now working
- Faye Pierce, Reidsville Housing Authority- no updates
- TJ Reynolds-Emwanta, CenterPoint Human Services, Winston-Salem- Glad to be back, 1 denial and 1 approval, sending outcomes to Emily

SOAR and Coordinated Assessment

The national SOAR program is working on how SOAR can work with Coordinated Assessment (CA) in communities. Emily will take the ideas from today's discussion to inform the work at the federal level.

All HUD Continuum of Cares are required to set up CA processes to coordinate the front door of their homeless service system. CA can go by other names (Coordinated Intake, Coordinated Access, etc.) but it refers to the same thing.

Right now, people looking for homeless and housing services face an uncoordinated process in accessing programs and shelters. Currently:

- People in crisis are responsible for finding beds and programs
 - Given list of programs and contact information
 - Caseworkers can sometimes assist but are often frustrated as well
- People find a bed that is available but may not be the best fit for helping them into housing
- First come, first serve basis for serving people in need

CA is meant to:

- How to access the system is easier
 - A phone call to make or a place to go

- It's not about who you know to access the system
- Assessment is used to determine the best fit for housing and homeless programs
 - Using a uniform assessment tool to review and compare need of people accessing system
 - People are triaged based on severity of need
- System takes on the responsibility of helping people find the best fit to get into housing as quickly as possible
- Every CoC or ESG funded agency is required to participate

Each CoC is tasked with designing a system that meets the need of the local community. CoCs are in different places with CA:

- Some have started implementing and others are still in the planning phase
- Some communities are starting with particular populations (single adults, families, veterans, etc.)
- Different assessments are being used by communities

Make sure that you know what is going on in your community with Coordinated Assessment. If you want to know who is working on CA in your CoC, contact Emily at soar@ncceh.org.

Potential Benefits for SOAR

- Could be a way for the community to identify SOAR referrals at an earlier point in the process
- Create better referrals for SOAR
 - Educate assessors about what a good SOAR referral is
 - Saving SOAR caseworkers time because reducing the inappropriate referrals received

Challenges with CA and SOAR

- Disconnect between CoCs and SOAR
 - SOAR referrals are made at a late point (2-3 months into housing them)
 - SOAR referrals are not a part of the initial assessment
 - There are no clear instructions to the CoC about how to incorporate SOAR
- SAMHSA and HUD use a different definition of homelessness
 - Creates confusion in the system that SOAR caseworkers can work with people who are ineligible populations for HUD programs
 - People make assumptions that the SOAR caseworker can't work with someone who they can
- SOAR caseworkers may have agency policies that prevent them from taking open referrals and CA may change the way that referrals are received
 - CA systems are changing referrals to a "warm handoff" of the assessors calling and scheduling an appointment
 - Some CA systems may start to do placements- placing people into programs that they are eligible for without the agency having to accept them

The national SOAR program wants to recommend a small set (5 or less) of questions that communities can ask to identify a good SOAR referral. Current questions that SOAR caseworkers ask:

- How long have they been homeless?
- What is their diagnosis?
- Have you ever received a check before?
 - When?
 - Why they were getting a check?
 - Why did it end?
- What is the current income?
- Are you able to do any kind of work? What kinds of work are you able to do?
- Tell me why you feel like you need SSI/SSDI?
- Visual evaluation- limping, discomfort while sitting, behaviors, scars, what was it like to have a conversation with them
- Functioning area prompts- ADLs, Social functioning, Concentration/Persistence/Pace
 - Could be a question about tasks that cover these functioning areas (cooking, going to school, etc.)
 - Provides a way to let assessor know it isn't just diagnosis to qualify for benefits

Emily will take these ideas to the national SOAR program so that feedback from the field is taken into account.

Next SOAR Dialogue Call is on Thursday May 21st at 10 AM.

Register for the call by following this link: <http://www.ncceh.org/events/874/>