

## SOAR Dialogue Highlights

5/15/13

Attendees: Emily Carmody, Leona Williams, Charlene Powell, Elizabeth Lewin, Joyce Allen, Obie Johnson, Jeff Burns, Jacquetta Bullock, Lilly Moody, Tammy Towe, Donna Taylor

### Introductions

- Emily Carmody, NCCEH, Raleigh- in the process of scheduling our next SOAR training at the end of June in Chapel Hill
- Leona Williams, CenterPoint, Winston-Salem- Sitting in for TJ today, TJ started in December and has had one case awarded so far
- Jeff Burns, Hickory- Working on 7 cases right now, working on two Medical Summary Reports at this point and ahead of schedule on those cases
- Charlene Powell, East Carolina Behavioral Health- Working with two clients, worksheets are really helpful in pulling together the Medical Summary Reports
- Joyce Allen, Alliance Disability Advocates - Have one person that I am currently working with and he will get approved
- Jacquetta Bullock, New Direction Ministries, Henderson- I am working on 1 appeal and I have a new case and an appointment for another client next week
- Elizabeth Lewin, PATH, Statesville- 4 cases going right now and I got an approval last Friday
- Obie Johnson, PATH, Winston-Salem- just recently hired a new Disability Specialist and she finished her first Medical Summary Report
- Lilly Moody, Shelter Home, Caldwell County- Currently do not have any SOAR cases
- Tammy Towe, Asheville- Just started the SOAR process with 3 individuals
- Donna Taylor, Winston-Salem- Got a referral that was already at the hearing level so I'm looking for another referral

### SOAR Community Work Groups

#### SOAR Community Work Group Overview

- History
  - As SOAR began in North Carolina, we realized that local communities need to work together to support and grow SOAR projects.
  - Work groups create a space to gather to discuss SOAR and work on projects to:
    - Grow the SOAR program
    - Address breakdowns or barriers that SOAR caseworkers are facing while doing cases
  - Members
    - SOAR trained caseworkers
    - Community leaders who are interested in SOAR and want to get plugged into the SOAR program
      - Housing programs
      - Homeless services programs

- Shelter Executive Directors/Staff
  - Community Leaders
  - SSA
  - DSS
- Benefits
  - Some work groups have helped communities to get more SOAR dedicated caseworker positions
  - Work out streamlined processes with SSA and other large systems that interact with SOAR caseworkers
- Questions:
  - Leona- We are holding nominations for new Chair for the work group in Winston-Salem. Can we also have a Vice-Chair? The idea is that the Vice-Chair can succeed the Chair.
    - Emily- We don't have too many prescriptions about structure with work groups and it would depend on the wants and needs of the community.
    - Emily- Chair positions are there to gather the group, organize the agenda and be a point person for NCCEH in terms of communication about needs of the group.
- SOAR Community Certification
  - We designed this Certification process to provide SOAR work groups a path to create an ongoing work group and a strong SOAR program
    - All tasks build on top of the previous tasks (Bronze, Silver, and Gold Levels)
    - Certification information is available on our website: [http://www.ncceh.org/attachments/contentmanagers/27/SOAR\\_Community\\_Certification\\_5-10-FINAL.pdf](http://www.ncceh.org/attachments/contentmanagers/27/SOAR_Community_Certification_5-10-FINAL.pdf)
    - There are deliverables for each task that communities need to turn into NCCEH
    - Great way to get recognized for the work you are doing
- Does a SOAR work group sound like a good resource for your community?
  - Jeff- Yes. We have so many agencies and committees in our community that it would be a good thing to have a work group to gather these various groups together to talk about SOAR.
  - Lilly- I think this is an awesome process. This way we can get community partners more knowledgeable about the process including the Housing Authority and mental health agencies.
  - Emily- Definitely. Including housing providers allows them to refer people to you for a SOAR case AND allows you to speed up the process of referring SOAR applicants for housing.

### **Projects for SOAR Work Groups**

- Projects for SOAR Caseworkers
  - Very basic benefit of gathering SOAR caseworkers at one table to discuss issues and know who is doing SOAR in your community.

- Helps communities to see where there are holes in SOAR coverage in the community.
    - Reduces the feelings of isolation of SOAR caseworkers.
    - Contact Emily Carmody ([emily@ncceh.org](mailto:emily@ncceh.org)) to get a list of SOAR trained caseworkers in your community. Some of these individuals are on our website as well: <http://ncceh.org/soarcontactinfo/>
  - Regularly review outcomes for your community to see where some support is needed
    - Quarterly community outcome reports are posted on NCCEH's website: <http://www.ncceh.org/soarcommunityoutcomes2013/>
    - Look to approval rating, decision days to see if there are barriers that can be addressed or support given to SOAR caseworkers
- Projects to Streamline the SOAR Process
  - Have regular contact between the work group and SSA
    - You can address issues in the local field office
    - Allows for things such as large trainings for SOAR caseworkers (getting trained to do the SSI application in the field) and designating a Claims Representative in the local SSA office
  - Inviting other key systems in to streamline the process like medical records departments or treatment providers.
- Projects to Grow the SOAR Program
  - Allow your community to see where there is a need for SOAR in your community
  - Some work groups have been successful in creating different avenues of funding for a dedicated SOAR caseworker positions.
  - Presentations to various groups and increase their investment in SOAR
    - Mental Health Agencies
    - Hospitals
    - Jails
- Projects to Increase Access to Treatment for Applicants
  - We have been seeing increased difficulty in accessing mental health and physical health treatment for the uninsured.
    - Invite local indigent care clinics and your mental health MCO to discuss why you need better access to services and the benefits that SOAR can provide those systems
    - Never hurts to gather data from all the SOAR caseworkers- how many days people are waiting or some key examples of the barriers
  - Other ideas to explore- volunteer clinics, outside of the box ideas
  - Joyce- I got a call from Alliance (MCO) with questions about SSA benefits which surprised me
    - Had someone who is in treatment in Florida who needed to apply for benefits
    - Donna- residency would be in North Carolina because it is where they plan to live forever

- Emily- Never assume that these larger systems (MCOs, hospitals) understand the SSA process. This can be a benefit of them partnering with you- you have access to SSA contacts to answer questions.
    - SOAR workgroups can also be a great source of feedback for these systems about the barriers to getting services and medical records for applicants.
  - Keeping SOAR a Part of the Larger Homeless Service System
    - In NC, most homeless services are either organized under Continuum of Care (CoC) or a Regional Committee
    - Need to make sure your SOAR work group is plugged into this larger group and priorities
    - Examples:
      - Targeting Permanent Supportive Housing for Chronically Homeless- As communities target individuals for PSH, how can we coordinate that with a referral for a SOAR caseworker?
      - Coordinated Assessment/Intake- Communities are at different points with this
        - HUD is asking communities to create a coordinated way to assess people who are looking to access shelters and housing and getting them to the most appropriate program to address their needs
        - Obie- Winston-Salem is in the process of developing this process and getting it started here
        - It would be important to discuss with your CoC and/or Regional Committee as to how SOAR can be plugged into this process
          - Is this a way to streamline referrals?
          - Are they able to prioritize these referrals for SOAR caseworkers?

As you start working on SOAR Community Work Groups, please feel free to contact Emily Carmody at [emily@ncceh.org](mailto:emily@ncceh.org).

**Next SOAR Dialogue Call: Thursday, June 20th at 10 AM**

**You can register for the call by visiting NCCEH's website: <http://ncceh.org/en/cev/699>**