

SOAR Dialogue Highlights 4/14/18

Attendees: Emily Carmody, Natasha Posey, Stacey Costner, Kenneth Koontz, Connie Ness, Diamond Jenkins-Nelson, Pamalia Davis, Mitch Fryer, Sabrina Corbett, Dora Speight, Coby Crandall, Kathryn Coiner-Collier

Introductions

- Emily Carmody, NCCEH, Raleigh- Next SOAR training on May 22-23, 2018 in Greensboro
- Natasha Posey, Southlight, Raleigh- no updates
- Stacey Costner, Mental Health Association, Cleveland County- community has really latched on to the importance of SOAR, seeing more referrals and agency is trying to navigate increase
- Kenneth Koontz, United Way of Forsyth County, Winston-Salem- no updates
- Diamond Jenkins-Nelson, Southlight, Raleigh- Wake County SOAR meeting this week with SOAR overview trainings being held for two local communities
- Pamalia Davis, Housing for New Hope, Durham-1 denial that is not a Recon case, agency is now partnering with community organization to have a new, private meeting place for SOAR applicants
- Mitch Fryer, Interactive Resource Center, Greensboro- several applications to submit, requested and received prison records successfully with the new resource posted on the NCCEH website
- Sabrina Corbett, Allied Churches of Alamance County, Burlington- no applications currently
- Dora Speight, Servant Center, Greensboro- getting trained next month
- Coby Crandall, The Pro Se Reentry Recovery SVCS, Raleigh- no updates
- Kathryn Coiner-Collier, Atrium Health, Charlotte- submitted first 2 applications last month and 2 more this month

Engaging SOAR Applicants

Overview

Developing a trusting relationship with SOAR applicants is a key factor in successful SOAR applications. Engaging applicants is a skill that all SOAR caseworkers need to address the challenges of SOAR applications: providing very personal information on a tight timeline and engaging a person in a crisis in process that involves a lot of paperwork with no real “action” for the applicant to see. Below are notes from a discussion with SOAR caseworkers about the challenges with engaging SOAR applicants.

Engaging Applicants Who are Reluctant to Apply for Benefits

Some potential SOAR applicants are reluctant to apply for benefits for several reasons. SOAR caseworkers share tips on how to engage individuals around their specific concerns.

- Scared benefits mean they will not be able to work:
 - Reassure applicants that they can still work with benefits and explain limitations and programs
 - Discuss work history and the challenges they have experienced working in the past

- Discuss financial needs and how benefits would help support housing and meeting basic needs
- Explain that SSDI benefits are a way to receive support from a system they paid into through working
- Have a conversation with the applicant along with trusted service providers to hear the whole picture
- Past denials make reluctant to apply again:
 - Get a copy of the CD of the past case to see what information was missed, review the new strategy you would take
 - Discuss SOAR training and how it prepares you to help with the application
- Paranoia about the government:
 - If they have a person (case manager, friend, etc.) that they trust, invite them into the conversation about benefits to give assurance
 - Focus on goals that the person wants to accomplish and how benefits will help them achieve that

It is important to understand that engaging in the application process can be difficult at times. Not everyone will want to apply and sometimes it will take repeated efforts to engage. SOAR caseworkers should look for supports (mentor, coworker, supervisor) to help them in these challenging situations.

Applicants Miss Appointments or Disappear During Application

As SOAR caseworkers work on applications, some applicants may not make scheduled meetings or disappear altogether.

- Recommend slowing down the referral process to ensure that the applicant is engaged by team/service provider who can support the application process, work with the applicant for a little bit before establishing a protective filing date
- In the first meeting get key pieces of information about who they keep in touch with and where they spend their days, so you know how to find them or who would know where they are
- If person goes missing, look for them for a couple of weeks, and then let DDS know that you continue to look for them. For the most part, DDS has worked with SOAR caseworkers on timelines for the caseworker to find the applicant.
- If the applicant continues to miss meetings, ask if a different location or time would work better. Caseworkers can also ask the applicant what is getting in the way of coming to meetings. It could be something the caseworker can address.
- Incentivize meetings by providing needed items like bus passes, toiletries, clothes, food, etc.

Applicants in Jail or Hospital

- Being admitted to these systems may be beneficial in developing a SOAR case
 - Caseworker knows where the applicant is
 - Link to treatment and more records to submit
 - Able to see the applicant while sober if substance use is an issue and assess functioning

- SOAR caseworkers can contact their local jail to ask about the process to be able to meet with SOAR applicants while in jail
 - SOAR caseworkers will need an attorney's room if available to allow for privacy
 - Some counties require an application for being able to request attorney rooms
 - If SOAR caseworkers need support in reaching out to the jail:
 - Emily can help connect to jails who embrace SOAR to help with peer-to-peer conversations
 - Emphasize that SOAR is looking to stop the revolving door on the jail for applicants
 - Offer to take referrals from the jail
- SOAR caseworkers report that doctors in jails have been willing to sign medical summary reports because they are familiar with the applicants
- If applicant is in a state hospital, SOAR caseworkers can work with the assigned case manager to set up a meeting with the applicant.
- As applicants move in and out of systems, it is important that they have the SOAR caseworker's contact information
 - One caseworker laminates a list of important contacts for all clients
 - SOAR caseworkers have also provided cards in sandwich bags to keep dry

Please feel free to contact Emily Carmody at soar@ncceh.org with questions or issues around engaging SOAR applicants.