Connection to Income:
Benefits Payments through VA and SSA

August 5, 2014
Logistics

- Asking questions during the webinar
  - All participant phone lines are muted
  - You’ll be unable to ask questions by phone
  - Please type your question in the on screen chat box
  - There will be two opportunities during the webinar to ask questions

- Post webinar survey
  - Kyle McEvilly, Communications and Program Assistant (NCHV), kmcevilly@nchv.org
Asking Questions During the Training

- Submit questions in the chat box on the webinar
- E-mail questions to Kyle McEvilly at kmcevilly@nchv.org
- Submit questions through the post-training survey
Working with Local VSOs to Connect Veterans to VA Benefits

Paul Varela
Disabled American Veterans (DAV)
Using SOAR to Connect Veterans to Social Security Benefits

SSI/SSDI OUTREACH, ACCESS, AND RECOVERY
SAMHSA SOAR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER

Sponsored by:
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

August 2014
Agenda

- What is SOAR?
- Differences in definitions – Social Security vs. VA disability benefits
- Social Security fast track programs for Veterans
- How Social Security and VA benefits impact one another
- Incorporate SOAR into your program
SOAR stands for SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery

Focus is on people who are homeless or at risk for homelessness

Sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in collaboration with SSA since 2005

All 50 states currently participate; no direct funding provided to states
Changing Lives Since 2005

- Over 19,000 persons experiencing or at risk for homelessness have been approved on initial application.

- 65 percent approval rate overall.
  - Top eight states served over 4000 individuals and have an 89 percent approval rate.
  - Compares to 10-15 percent for unassisted applications from people who are homeless and 29 percent for all applicants.

- Approvals were received in an average of 100 days.
- Appeals can take a year or more; many people give up and do not appeal.
SSI & SSDI: The Basics

- **SSA**: Social Security Administration
- **SSI**: Supplemental Security Income; needs based; federal benefit rate is $721 per month in 2014; provides Medicaid in most states
- **SSDI**: Social Security Disability Insurance; amount depends on earnings put into SSA system; Medicare generally provided after 2 years of eligibility
- The disability determination process for both programs is the same
Definition of Disability

- The definition of disability and application process is different for VA and SSA benefits
- Discharge status is not a factor in SSI/SSDI determination
- Disabling condition does not need to be related to military service
- Those denied for VA benefits may still be eligible for SSI/SSDI
- Veterans can access SSA benefits while they are waiting for VA benefits
- There is no partial disability with Social Security
SSA Definition of Disability

- For SSI/SSDI, the Veteran needs to show:
  - Evidence of a physical or mental health condition, which results in functional impairments that limit their ability to work at a substantial gainful level (quantified as $1070/month in 2014).
  - That the disabling condition has lasted, or is expected to last, for 12 months or end in death.

- Why is the applicant unable to work?
SSA Fast Track Programs

100% Permanent and Total Veterans Initiative

- Began March 2014
- Expedites SSI/SSDI applications from Veterans who have 100% P&T rating from the VA
- Does not guarantee SSI/SSDI approval
- Veterans should identify themselves as a “Veteran rated 100% P&T” when initiating the SSI/SSDI application, and should provide the VA rating notification letter to SSA.
SSA Fast Track Programs

Wounded Warriors

- Veterans who received disabling mental or physical health injuries while on active duty on or after October 1, 2001, regardless if the injury occurred in the U.S. or in combat.

- When initiating the SSI/SSDI application, Veterans should inform SSA that their injury occurred while on active duty.
SSA & VA Benefits: Impact On Healthcare

- SSI and SSDI come with Medicaid and Medicare
- Assists those without access to VA healthcare services
- Veterans who qualify for VA healthcare can use Medicaid or Medicare to pay for services not covered by the VA
- Helps Veterans located in areas that have limited access to VA facilities
SSA & VA Benefits: Impact On Cash Benefits

- The Veteran comes out ahead – adds cash benefit and health coverage

- SSI – Supplemental Security Income
  - Needs based program, so VA benefits will affect SSI cash amount, depending on the amount of VA benefits

- SSDI – Social Security Disability Insurance
  - SSDI benefits are not affected by income through VA benefits.

- See SSA and VA Disability Benefits: Tips for Veterans for calculations and details
Incorporate SOAR into HVRP Services

- Increases housing stability for Veterans while they are seeking and after obtaining employment
- Veterans can work while applying for SSA benefits and after receiving them
- For details on SSA work incentives, see issue brief: SOAR and Employment for SSI/SSDI Beneficiaries
- Connect with SOAR in your community
  - Training opportunities
  - Community collaboration for SSI/SSDI applications
SOAR Online Training

http://soarworks.prainc.com/

- Free, web-based course to train case managers in completing SSI/SSDI applications using SOAR
- Standardized, self-paced training
- Includes completion of a practice SSI/SSDI application
- Individualized feedback from the SOAR TA Center
- 16 CEUs from NASW
- Class 1 of the course provides a SOAR 101
Get Involved with SOAR

- Find your SOAR TA Center Liaison
- Find your SOAR State Team Lead
- Connect with SOAR in your community
- Problems? Let us know!

http://soarworks.prainc.com/directory
For More Information

Visit the SOAR website at:

http://soarworks.prainc.com/

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