

NVTAC

NATIONAL VETERANS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER

WEBINAR:

***Using Social Security Disability
Benefits to Increase Income
and Housing Stability for
Veterans***

**WEDNESDAY
JUNE 24, 2015**

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SAMHSA SOAR TA Center
Policy Research Associates, Inc.

<http://soarworks.prainc.com/>

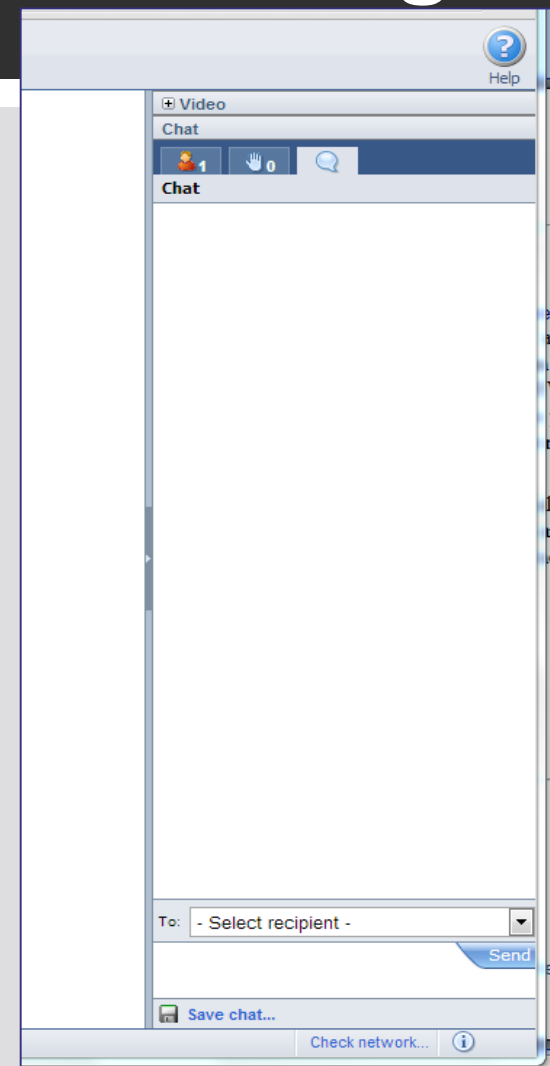
Logistics

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

- Post webinar survey
 - É Survey from Cindy Borden, Assistant Director TA and Training (NCHV)

Asking Questions During the Training

- Submit questions in the chat box on the webinar
- E-mail questions to Cindy Borden at cborden@nchv.org
- Submit questions through the post-training survey





Using Social Security Disability Benefits to Increase Income and Housing Stability for Veterans

Presented for:

National Veterans Technical Assistance Center (NVTAC) and Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP) grantees

June 2015



SOAR Technical Assistance Initiative

- SOAR – SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access & Recovery
- Focuses on people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- SOAR is a model for assisting individuals to apply for Social Security disability benefits
- Sponsored by the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in collaboration with SSA since 2005
- SOAR is active in all 50 states; no direct funding is provided to states
- SOAR TA Center helps states and communities by providing technical assistance and training

Changing Lives Since 2005

- 22,810 persons experiencing or at risk for homelessness have been approved on initial application
- 65% approval rate overall, in an average of 94 days in 2014
 - Top 10 SOAR states have average approval rate of 82%
- Compares to 10-15 percent for unassisted applications from people who are homeless and 29 percent for all applicants
- Appeals can take a year or more; many people give up and do not appeal

What is the need?

- The January 2014 point-in-time count identified almost 50,000 homeless Veterans
 - SOAR can also serve those who are at-risk for homelessness, or who recently entered permanent housing without income
- Half of Veterans experiencing homelessness have severe mental illness and over half have other health issues
- High prevalence of traumatic brain injury (TBI), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and sexual trauma among homeless Veterans contributes to difficulty in maintaining employment and housing

Importance of SSI/SSDI for Veterans

- SSA disability benefits can provide access to:
 - Income – Veterans can receive SSI/SSDI in conjunction with, or as an alternative to, VA disability benefits
 - Health insurance – Veterans can use the Medicaid and Medicare health benefits that comes with SSI/SSDI to supplement VA health services
- For Veterans with disabilities, SSI/SSDI can increase income & housing stability, and reduce their future risk of homelessness
- 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*

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 limits his/her ability to work at a substantial gainful level (quantified as \$1090/month in 2015)
 - 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

- Expedites SSI/SSDI applications from Veterans who have 100% P&T rating from the VA
- Does not guarantee SSI/SSDI approval

Wounded Warriors

- Veterans who received disabling mental or physical health injuries while on active duty on or after October 1, 2001
- The injury does not need to have occurred during combat operations



Justice-Involved Veterans

BEST PRACTICES FROM THE SOAR TA CENTER

Myth Buster

Justice Involved Persons can apply for benefits!

- ✓ With active warrants
- ✓ While currently incarcerated (minimum of 30 days prior to release)
- ✓ On probation or parole

What Happens to Benefits for Justice Involved Persons?

- Social Security Administration (SSA) regulates the receipt of disability benefits while a person is incarcerated in a penal institution
- The rules are different for both SSI and SSDI beneficiaries

For SSI

- Incarcerated for a full calendar month, benefits are suspended
- Released in less than 12 calendar month, benefits can be reinstated upon release
- If an SSI recipient is incarcerated for 12 consecutive calendar months their SSI benefits are terminated and they must reapply
- Reapplication can be made 30 days prior to their expected release date but benefits cannot begin until release

For SSDI

- Recipients are eligible to continue receiving their benefits until they are *convicted* of a criminal offense *and* confined to a penal institution for more than 30 continuous days. After that time, their benefits are suspended.
- Benefits are reinstated the month following their release into the community



Opportunities for SOAR and Justice-Involved Veterans

- Veterans Courts
- Re-entry Programs
- Stand Down Events



What's Next?

USING SOAR IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Incorporate SOAR into Your Services

- ✓ Gather more information:
 - Issue Brief: *Connecting Veterans to Social Security Disability Benefits: A Key Component in Ending Veteran Homelessness*
 - Reach out to the SOAR TA Center with questions and to help you plan how to use SOAR
- ✓ Explore options for SOAR training with your staff
 - Free online SOAR training, available at:
<http://soarworks.prainc.com>
- ✓ Collaborate with community partners to refer Veterans to local SOAR initiatives



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