



Homeless to Housed: Walking the Journey of Accessing Mainstream Benefits

Hello/Osiyo!



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Starting Point

Are you familiar with SOAR?

Does your agency/community assist people to apply for Social Security Disability Benefits (SSI/SSDI)?

Is there a need for timely access to SSI/SSDI in your community?

A wide-angle landscape photograph of Asheville, North Carolina, showing a series of rolling mountains under a hazy, overcast sky. The foreground is dominated by a dark, dense line of trees. The middle ground features several mountain ridges, with the most prominent one in the center-right. The background shows more distant, lighter mountain ranges. The overall atmosphere is soft and atmospheric due to the mist or haze. The text 'ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA' is centered in the upper half of the image in a white, sans-serif font.

ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

582,462

**The number of people experiencing homelessness
on a single night in January 2022.**

In 2022, instances of homelessness increased significantly for people with disabilities and individuals in unsheltered settings.

Single individuals represent the largest group of people experiencing homelessness; in 2022 the rate increased by 3.1%.

People who identify as Black, African American, African, and Indigenous continue to be overrepresented among people experiencing homelessness.

1 in 200

Members of Native Communities are unhoused vs. 1 in 1,000 of the United States population

Overrepresented

American Indian and Alaska Natives represent the 2nd highest rate of people experiencing homelessness when compared to other racial groups; around 8% of the unhoused population

Undercounted

Statistics do not capture all individuals experiencing homelessness that reside on reservations or those that do not fit HUD's definition of homelessness.

Unique

Native Communities also experience distinctive challenges that have contributed to and compounded issues of homelessness and poverty.

Multigenerational and multifamily households.

Native communities may experience limited community infrastructure, lack of essential utilities, sparse housing availability, and be in need of timely access supportive services.



**“I was trying my best
to stay alive.”**

Bonnie's Story
Birdtail Sioux First Nation

SSI/SSDI

**General
Assistance**

SNAP

Section 8

**Housing
First**

TANF

PSH

PATH

VA Benefits

What We Do

SOAR

SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery

SAMHSA SOAR Technical Assistance Center

Provides assistance with growing the SOAR initiative and supporting SOAR-trained case workers and communities

Culturally sensitive,
trauma-informed,
community-based
model for assisting
eligible applicants to
apply for SSI/SSDI

SOAR is active in all 50
states, but the initiative
must grow in order to serve
all those in need

SOAR assists applicants
who are experiencing or at
risk of homelessness

Serious and persistent
mental or physical
health diagnoses,
which often co-occur

SOAR seeks to answer the
question, why is the
applicant unable to work?



SSI/SSDI: An Overview

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

Eligibility based on need: low income and resources; living arrangement

Monthly amount based on Federal Benefit Rate: \$914/month (2023)

Date of eligibility based on Protective Filing Date/Application Date

Health insurance: Medicaid

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)

Eligibility based on insured status (FICA payments)

Monthly amount based on earnings history

Date of eligibility based on “date of onset” of disability, 5 month waiting period

Health insurance: Medicare

SSA's Definition of Disability

**Medical
Conditions**

Diagnoses
Documentation
Duration



**Functional
Impairments**

Severity
Work
Substantial
Gainful Activity
(SGA)

SOAR Across the Lifespan

Adults

Age 18+

Eligible for both SSI and SSDI

Is the applicant able to work and earn at Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA)

Youth & Young Adults

Age 18-24

Eligible for SSI and/or SSDI (as a Disabled Adult Child)

Evaluated under the adult definition of disability

Age 18 Redetermination

Youth aging out of foster care

Children

Birth to age 18

Eligible for SSI only

How a child's functioning compares to a child of the same age who does not have impairments

What Makes SOAR Unique?

**Serving as the
applicant's
representative**

**Collecting all
medical
records and
developing
new evidence
when needed**

**Writing a
Medical
Summary
Report**

**Submitting
complete,
high-quality
applications**

SOAR WORKS

SOAR focuses on telling the applicant's story and clearly linking their diagnoses to their functional limitations and work. Applicants are not just medical records or applications; they are people with goals, accomplishments, and dreams.



BIG Impact



INCOME

HEALTH
INSURANCE

EMPLOYMENT
SUPPORTS

COMMUNITY
CONNECTION

CONNECTION
TO FAMILY
AND FRIENDS

SUBSIDIZED OR
SUPPORTIVE
HOUSING

Outcomes

In 2022, SOAR-assisted SSI/SSDI applications had a 68% approval rate in an average of 153 days.

Cumulative approval rate of 65%

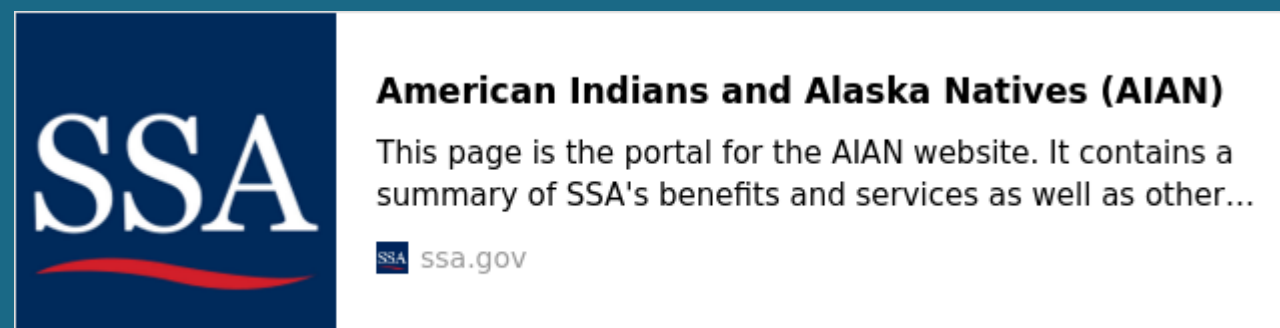
The top 10 states have an average approval rate of 81%

Over 100,000 people served through SOAR!

SSA Commitment

The Social Security Administration is committed to serving Native Communities and offers many resources and services:

- Video Service Delivery locations
- Tribal Consultation & Coordinated Plan
- Ticket to Work & Tribal Employment Networks



Special Considerations

There are special considerations and exceptions for income and resources when applying for SSI/SSDI:

- Certain cash payments may not count toward resources (ex: Coball Court Case, Individual Indian Monies, etc.)
- SSA may not count allotted Indian land or money held in restricted IIM accounts
- Medicaid/Medicare can be used at Indian Health Service (IHS) clinics or for services not covered through IHS

SOAR in Native Communities

“It is truly important to take your time to get to know the applicant. Let them know you want them to succeed, and listen to their story. It is helpful to validate the experience of intergenerational trauma and always acknowledge the impact of colonization; honor community and the importance of the applicant’s Native identity.”

—Penny Wertenberger, SOAR-trained case worker, IHS-funded Urban Indian Clinic, Missoula, Montana

We know the statistics.

Native communities experience high rates of historical and generational trauma.

Systems that are designed to support our community often create barriers.

How can we help those in need navigate social supports with kindness, wisdom, and cultural competency?



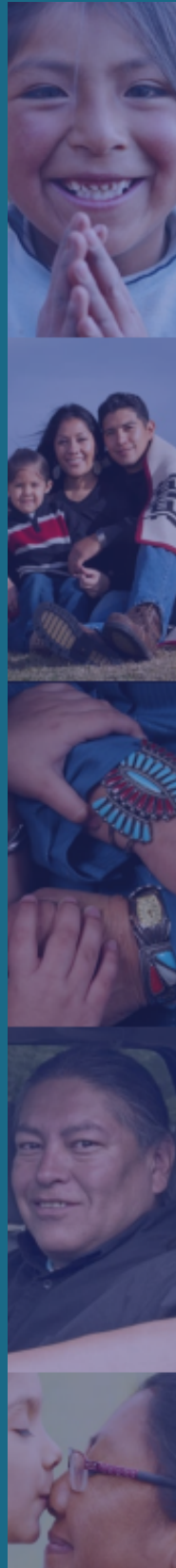
Expanding SOAR in Native Communities

Community buy-in is critical!

What role can you/your agency contribute to the SOAR process?

Collaboration and communication is key!

Getting Involved in SOAR



Getting Involved with SOAR in Tribal Communities:

You want to be a SOAR provider? That's great! Here's what to expect.

SOAR promotes recovery and wellness through increased access to Social Security disability benefits for eligible American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) individuals who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and have a serious mental illness, medical impairment, and/or a co-occurring substance use disorder. SOAR providers assist individuals with complete and quality applications. This is not an easy task, but we believe it is well worth the effort!

Training

The SOAR Online Course trains providers to assist individuals with the Social Security disability application process. The course includes an Adult Curriculum for assisting with Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) claims for adults and a Child Curriculum for assisting with SSI claims for children (under the age of 18).

- The SOAR Online Course: Adult and Child Curricula are free and are located on the SOARWorks website (<https://soarworks.prainc.com/content/soar-online-course-catalog>).
- Each curriculum consists of seven classes, each of which has a series of articles, short quizzes, and a practice case component. The practice case provides an opportunity for trainees to apply what they have learned in the course by completing a sample application packet for a fictitious applicant using SOAR techniques.
- It takes approximately 20 hours to complete each curriculum and participants can work at their own pace, starting and stopping as they wish. However, we encourage students to complete the curriculum within 30 days to retain the information learned.
- Upon successful completion, participants will receive 20 continuing education units from the National Association of Social Workers.

Many SOAR Local Leads offer 1-day SOAR Online Course Review Sessions to review key components of the curriculum, discuss tribal, state and local practices, and connect new providers to local Social Security Administration (SSA) and Disability Determination Services (DDS) offices.

Time Commitment

We estimate that each SOAR application will take approximately 20-40 hours to complete, from initial engagement to receiving a decision on a claim. This generally occurs over the course of 60-90 days.

- The time spent on each application will vary depending on the amount of engagement that is needed as well as other variables such as the experience level of the SOAR worker. For example, engagement with an applicant who is residing in an institution may take 20 hours, while it may take longer to connect with someone who is living outside or difficult to contact.

SOAR Critical Components

SOAR providers with higher approval rates credit their success to implementing the SOAR critical components¹ and submitting high-quality applications. Use of these components significantly

¹ <https://soarworks.prainc.com/article/soar-model-critical-components>

Training
Time Commitment
Critical Components
Outcomes Tracking
Local Involvement

Becoming Trained

Standardized training across
all geographic areas

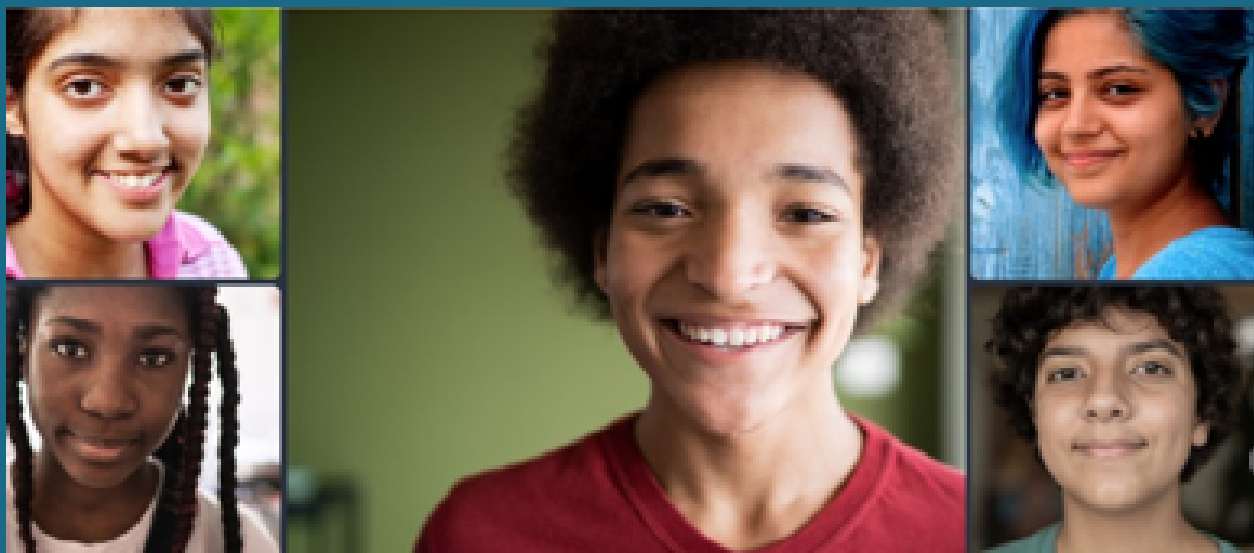
Course is free and can be
completed at your own pace

20 CEUs through the
National Association of
Social Workers (NASW)



SOAR Online Course: Adult Curriculum

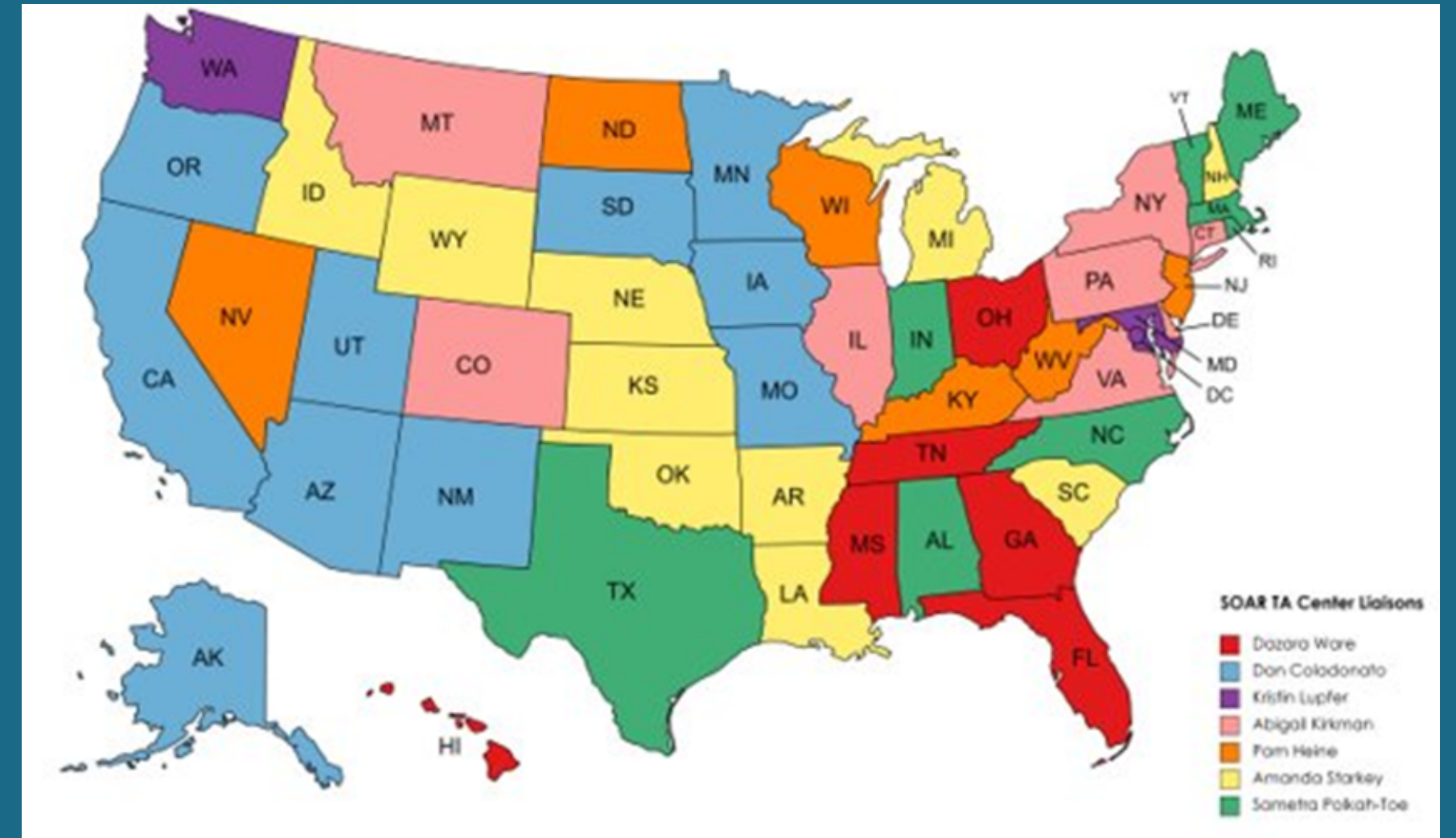
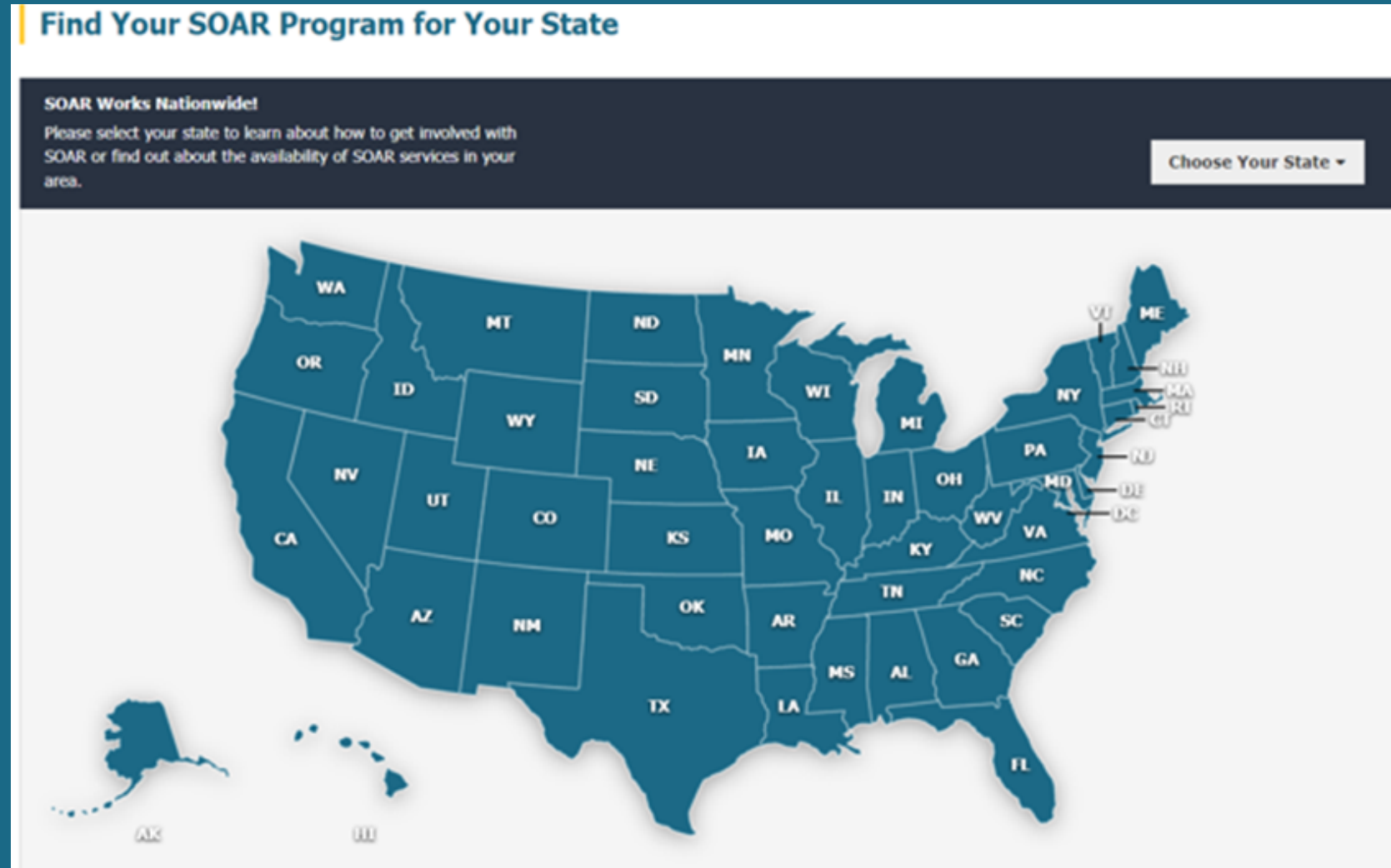
This course trains case workers to assist adults (age 18+) who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and have a serious mental illness, medical impairment, and/or a co-occurring substance use disorder to apply for the Social Security Administration's (SSA) disability programs, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).



SOAR Online Course: Child Curriculum

This course trains case workers to assist children (under age 18) who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and have a serious mental illness, medical impairment, and/or a co-occurring substance use disorder to apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI), a Social Security Administration (SSA) disability benefit program.

Connecting with SOAR in Your Community



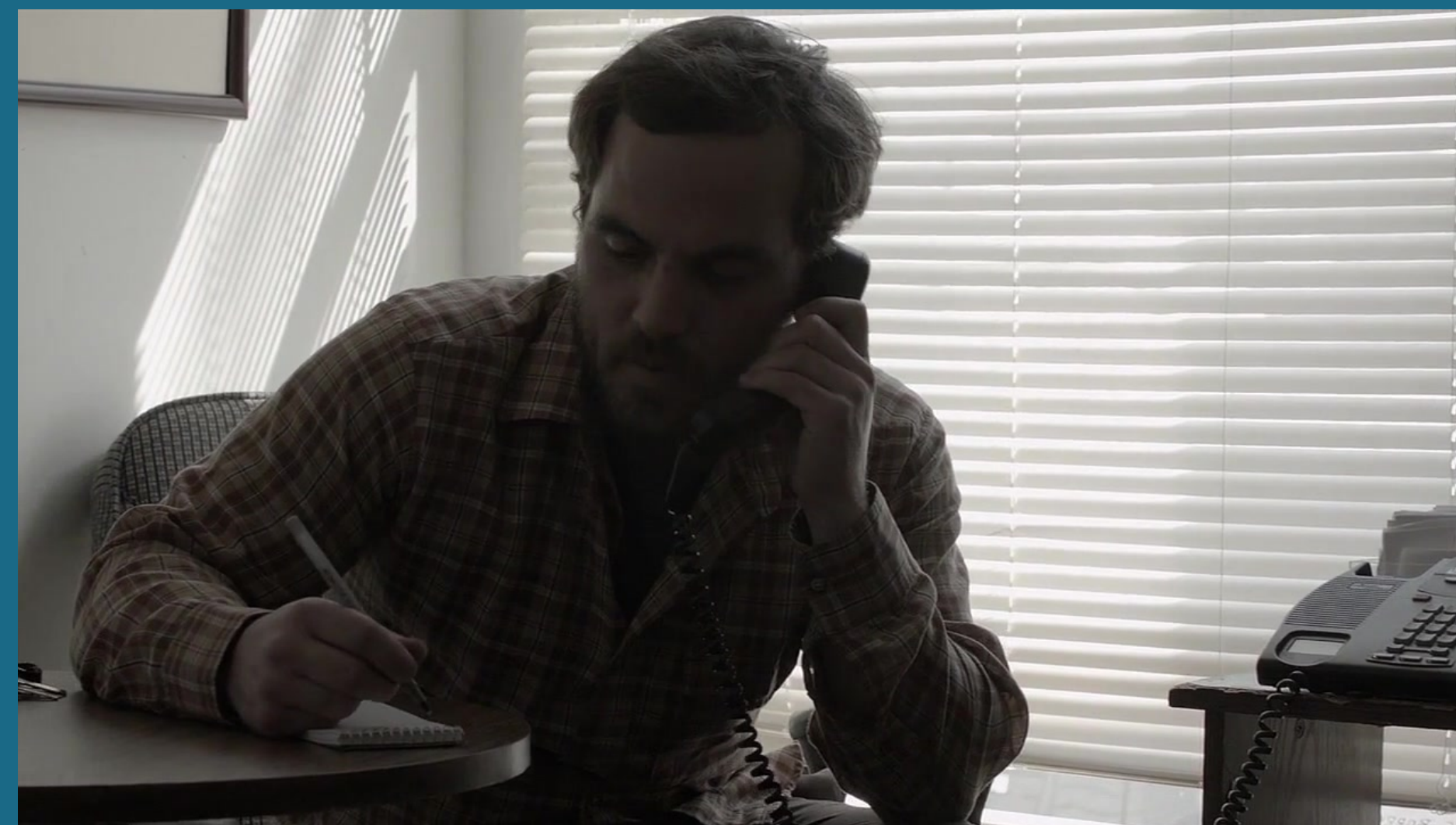
Your state/community may have an active SOAR initiative.

Reach out to your state's SOAR TA Center Liaison and

State Team Lead (STL)

Resources may be limited, which is a great opportunity to become involved!

Transforming Lives





Open
Discussion

Connect With Us

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WORKSHOP SURVEY

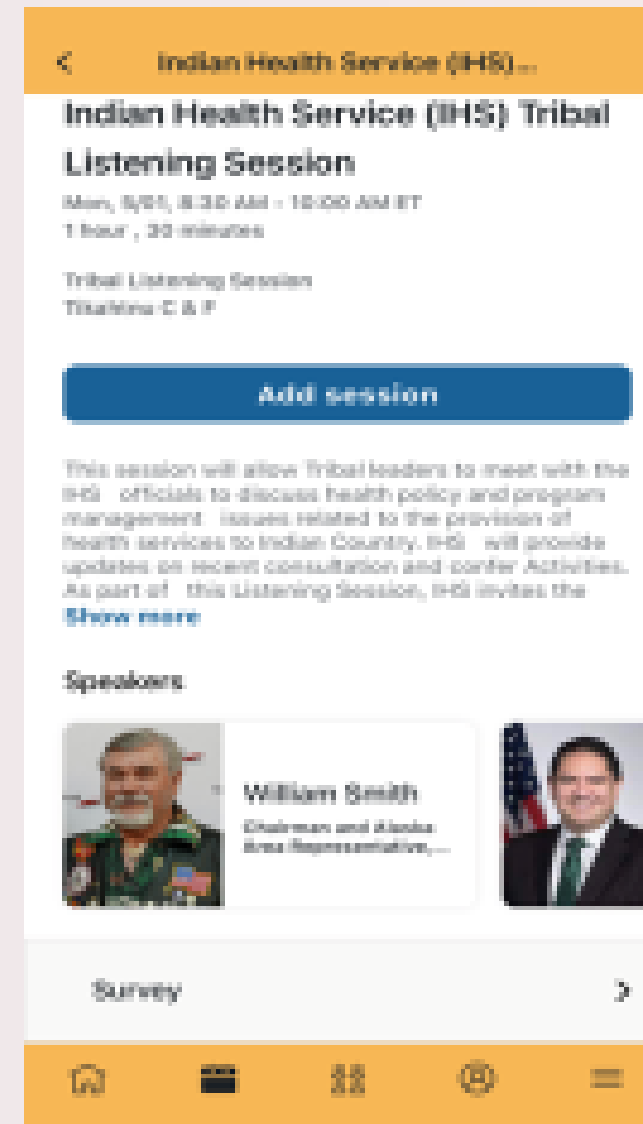
Participants who complete evaluations will be entered into a drawing to win prizes that will be presented at the Closing Plenary Session on Thursday at 3:30 PM.

From Web Browser



Use the QR Code to access the survey from a web browser

From Conference App



Navigate to the session page through the agenda schedule

