

NM SOAR NEWSLETTER

Issue 5

May 2011

Dear Friends:

This has been a busy month. We have begun the process of asking all of our SOAR reps to begin tracking their outcomes, using either the software program or paper form developed by PRA. The NM Coalition to End Homelessness is assisting the City of Albuquerque in its application for a large federal grant; part of that request will include funding for at least one

SOAR position. We have begun organizing our next Stepping Stones to Recovery training, which will take place in August in Albuquerque. We are organizing a monthly group where SOAR reps can get together to problem-solve and share their successes. We are also in the process of developing a fact sheet and letter that SOAR reps can give to physicians and PhD psychologists when requesting their signature on a

Medical Summary Report. We'll update you on all these activities in next month's newsletter.

Sincerely,

SOAR Steering Committee Co-Chairs

Lisa Huwal

NM Coalition to End Homelessness

Patrick Halsmer

NM Human Services Department

How to find out which DDS adjudicator is working on your SOAR app

When we first started SOAR in New Mexico, all SOAR applications were assigned to one adjudicator at DDS. Over time, that process has changed. When SSA sends a SOAR application over to DDS, the application is assigned to one of three or four different adjudicators.

When the adjudicator receives the SOAR application, he or she should immediately send the SOAR rep an "attorney/rep" letter. That letter includes the name and contact information for the adjudicator.

We have heard from some SOAR reps that they do not always re-

ceive that letter and as a result do not know who the assigned adjudicator is. Dana Dominguez, our DDS SOAR liaison, has promised to remind adjudicators to send out this letter to SOAR reps.

However, if you don't receive this letter soon after submitting a SOAR application to SSA, then you should contact Dana at her direct number (see your SOAR contact list). If Dana is unavailable, you can also call the main number at DDS (800-432-5868) and ask the person who answers the phone to tell you which adjudicator is working on that application.

THANK YOU UNMH!

This month marks one year since the University of New Mexico Hospital (UNMH) has been providing free medical records to SOAR representatives for inclusion in their SOAR applications.

Over the last year, many SOAR reps have been able to secure the medical records they need for their clients through this process.

We just wanted to give a huge "thank you" to UNMH for their partnership, especially to Karen Griego and her colleagues in the Medical Records Dept.

Make sure DDS knows medical records are on their way!

In April the SOAR Steering Committee discussed what happens when a SOAR rep collects many, many pages of SOAR medical records and how to ensure that all those medical records make it smoothly from SSA to DDS. When SSA SOAR liaisons receive a SOAR app with medical records, the following can happen:

- They can fax the medical records to DDS. In this case, DDS receives the medical records immediately.
- They can mail the medical records to DDS. They will do this if there are so many pages of records that it is not feasible to fax them. This means medical records will arrive at DDS after DDS has received the SOAR SSI/SSDI application.

If SSA mails the medical records, then DDS can do one of two things:

- DDS can scan in the records



themselves in-house.

- DDS can mail the medical records to an out-of-state contractor, who will scan in the records and send them to DDS electronically. With this process, it can take up to a week for DDS to receive the records electronically. DDS will choose this option if there are so many pages of records that it is not feasible to scan them in-house.

Because of this process, when a DDS adjudicator receives a SOAR application it may not

contain the medical records. More importantly, the DDS adjudicator may not even know when he/she first receives the SOAR app that medical records were included with the SOAR app. As a result, the adjudicator may begin ordering medical records that the SOAR rep has already obtained.

So, if your SOAR application includes a LOT of medical records, be proactive: call the DDS adjudicator as soon as possible and let him/her know medical records were included with the SOAR application.

The more organized your medical records are, the easier it is for SSA to fax them over, which is the best option. If there are records from multiple providers, separate and group the records by provider (but clip, don't staple them!).

SUCCESS!

Teddi Rivera became a SOAR rep in June 2010 and is a member of the SOAR Steering Committee. Since June, she has completed 7 SOAR applications, and is currently in the process of completing 4 more. Of those 7, she has 2 approvals and 1 denial (which she is appealing) and the others are still pending. Teddi has found that collecting the client's medical records and writing the Medical Summary Report are the most important components of a SOAR application. She says, "We are the ones who sit with our client...interviewing and getting to know them on a more personal level, learning about their history and life experiences. It is the medical summary report that gives a life to the client for the adjudicator." One of the biggest challenges of SOAR, in Teddi's experience, is simply the number of people who need SOAR versus the amount of time that she has. To address this challenge, one of Teddi's goals is to create a new agency that would solely focus on SOAR applications. Teddi advises SOAR reps to stay with each case until a decision is reached, even after the SOAR application is sent to DDS. Teddi contacts the adjudicator approximately every week to see if there is anything else they need from her or the client.