

Definitions of Homelessness used by SOAR and SSA

SOAR Homelessness and At-Risk Definitions

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery (SOAR) initiative is intended for individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The SOAR definition of homelessness is based on the definitions used by the SAMHSA Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) program.

PATH legislation refers to the Public Health Service Act definition of **homelessness**: “an individual who lacks housing (without regard to whether the individual is a member of a family), including an individual whose primary residence during the night is a supervised public or private facility that provides temporary living accommodations and an individual who is a resident in transitional housing.”

The PATH definition of **imminent risk for homelessness** commonly includes any of the following criteria: doubled-up living arrangement where the individual's name is not on the lease, living in a condemned building without a place to move, arrears in rent/utility payments, having received an eviction notice without a place to move, living in temporary or transitional housing that carries time limits, being discharged from a health care or criminal justice institution without a place to live.

SOAR is also appropriate for individuals who are being served by SSVF, HUD-VASH, Housing First and other Permanent Supportive Housing for those who were recently experiencing homelessness, and who are relying on grant support or have limited income to sustain their housing. Additionally, SOAR can be used to serve young people who are aging out of the foster care system.

SSA Homelessness Definitions

The Social Security Administration (SSA) definitions of homelessness are more closely aligned to literal homelessness. Not all SOAR cases will be given the electronic homeless flag described below, but applications that meet the SOAR definition of homelessness or imminent risk for homelessness above can be marked as SOAR in the “Remarks” section of the electronic application.

Homeless/Transient (Living Arrangement): An individual with no permanent living arrangement, i.e., no fixed place of residence, is considered homeless or transient. Someone who is transient is neither a member of a household nor a resident of an institution. For example:

- Someone who sleeps in doorways, overnight shelters, parks, bus stations, etc.
- A person who stays with a succession of friends or relatives and has no permanent living arrangement on the first moment of the month
- Source: <https://secure.ssa.gov/apps10/poms.nsf/lnx/0500835060>

Homeless Flag (Electronic Folder Flag): The homeless flag is added to the electronic folder "When it is alleged or apparent that the claimant is homeless."

- Source: <https://secure.ssa.gov/apps10/poms.nsf/lnx/0410005005> - see section E