



SOARing Together

Series 2: Letter 6 2021

Review

For the June 2021 newsletter, I wanted to touch base on some highlights over this fiscal year as it is coming to a close June 30th, 2021. I would like to offer a few reminders as we end one year and begin “SOARing” into another great year of serving some of Ohio’s vulnerable individuals. In so many ways, it was a tough year, but summer is finally here, COVID-19 appears to be slowing and thankfully we are all still here!! “SOAR Ohio Strong” ready to address the benefits needs of others.

The beginning of the year, we were all facing COVID-19 head on. We were challenged with adjusting and learning creative ways to continue serving those in need. Whether by working from home, meeting clients through telehealth or socially distancing ourself within our own agencies, SOAR Ohio specialists everywhere, rolled up their sleeves and overcame these difficult challenges!! How proud it is to be part of such a great team!!

During SFY 2021, the SOAR Ohio Team grew both in service providers and coverage area. COHHIO secured more funding to expand our efforts of moving the SOAR Ohio initiative throughout the state and created new partnerships with community, County, State and Federal agencies. Amy Lamerson continues to hold the position of SOAR Ohio State Lead and was promoted to the SOAR Ohio and HNHF Director. This opened the SOAR Ohio Coordinator position up with COHHIO, (this is where I come in to the picture). With COHHIO’s support and leadership, SOAR Ohio continues to set the bar for many best practices. Amy is also a part of the National SOAR team lead collaborative, where she brings back new training and guidance for Ohio’s SOAR providers to learn and incorporate those best practices into the SOAR model. During each quarter this year, we offered the promotion of the National online course training and Ohio specific certifications were completed by those who successfully made it through the SAMHSA SOAR online course. We are happy to report out that this approach has added over 30 new SOAR Ohio certified specialists, who are now **SOARing** with us.

Know someone who would be a great fit for the SOAR course work? Please share the links below with other community providers in your areas!

<https://soarworks.samhsa.gov/content/soar-online-course-catalog>

<https://cohhio.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2020-SOAR-Ohio-Certification-Process.pdf>

Trainings this year included a three-part SSA & SOAR Ohio learning series in webinar format in partnership presented by our amazing SSA Public Affair Specialists partners, Kelly Draggoo and Theresa Busher. This training series had more than 400 people registered and learning about the Social Security application process. You can view or share the link provided here to check the series out. <https://cohhio.org/programs/tta/training-materials/#soar>

SOAR Ohio hosted a SSA-3373 Function Report webinar and partnered with Lesli Westerback and Karen Stonestreet from Greater Cincinnati Behavioral and Paul Spencer, Homeless Unit Supervisor from the Division of Disability Determination. SOAR Ohio continues to offer both in state and national invitations for trainings, webinars and SOARing over Lunch from the National SOAR TA Center. <https://soarworks.samhsa.gov/topics/webinars>

Keeping in step with the many changes during the pandemic, SOAR Ohio worked closely with SSA to ensure our client applications were submitted and processed adhering to the fidelity of the SOAR methodology. Specialists were encouraged to take advantage of creating a *My Social Security Account* with their clients at the first appointment so that the client can self-advocate and access their SSA benefits information online. All of our hard work and dedication to the fidelity of the SOAR model has paid off, as SOAR Ohio is one of the first states given permission directly from SSA to set up secured email partnerships with local community agencies so that you are able to email the entire SOAR benefits claim directly to the local SSA field offices. (See attached document)

Recently, SOARWorks changed the webpage address to <https://soarworks.samhsa.gov/> so please make sure you have logged in using this link and re-register following their instructions.

Throughout this unimaginable year, I have heard it said, “we did our best to stay afloat” but each of us as the SOAR Ohio Team did so much more than ‘stay afloat’, we truly **SOAR**ed to the top! Again, as we come to the end of this SOAR Ohio state fiscal year, you are all wished health, safety and happiness!

*“I believe it is our attitude that determines our altitude. It is our attitude that allows us to **SOAR** above those things that would otherwise overcome us.” -T.D. Jakes*

SOARing Together,
Candace