



# Get Your Money and Get Out:



## A Collaboration to Facilitate Discharges from State Psychiatric Hospitals by Integrating Health Care for the Homeless SOAR Services

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### Introduction

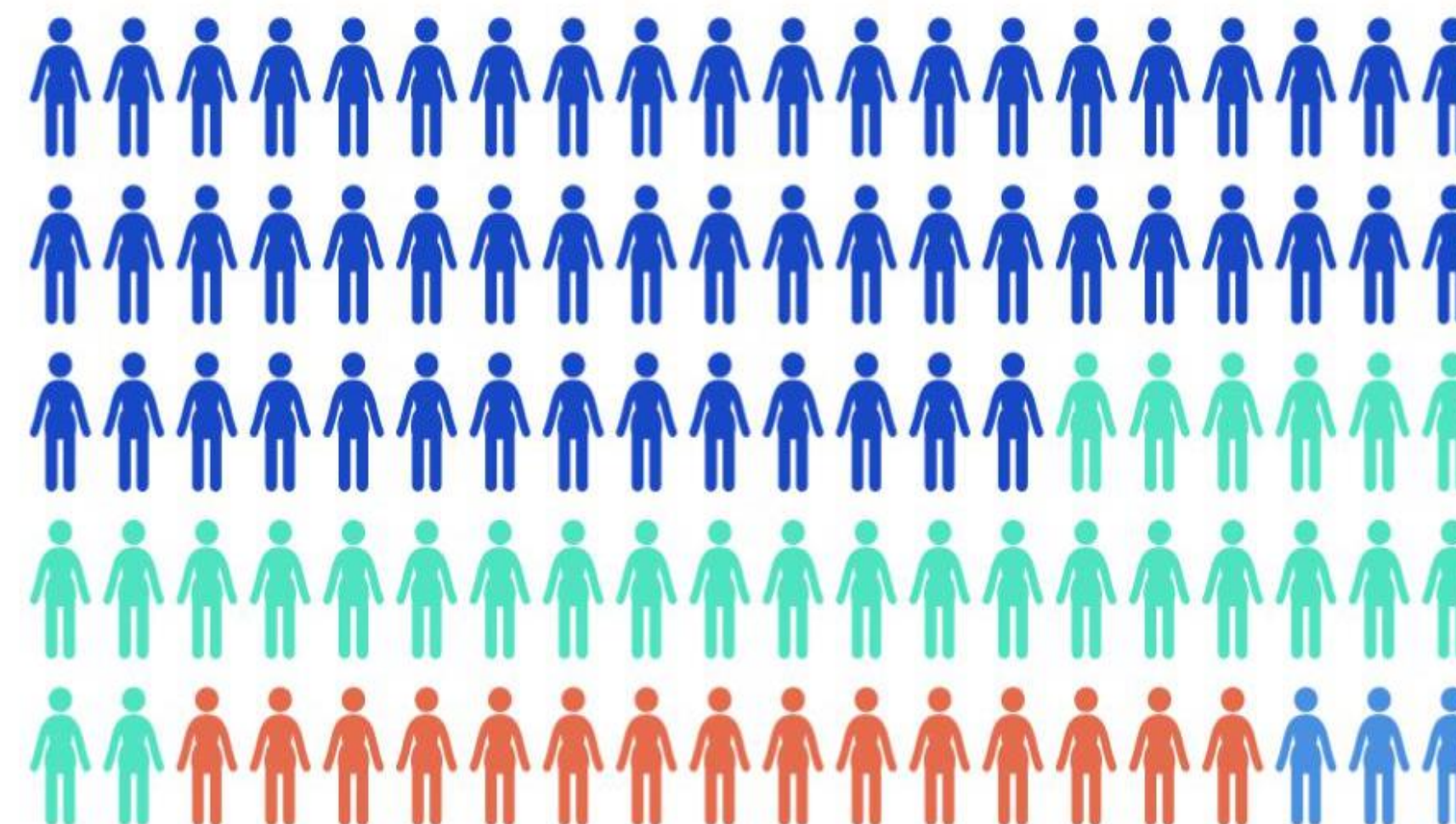
The SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery (SOAR) Initiative is a national program that expedites applications for Social Security disability benefits for eligible adults who have a serious mental illness. In January 2016, Health Care for the Homeless in Baltimore placed a disability benefits/SOAR specialist within the Spring Grove Hospital Center, the largest state psychiatric hospital in Maryland. The position is funded by the Maryland Community Services Trust Fund, which holds the proceeds from the sale and long-term lease of facilities previously operated by the Behavioral Health Administration. The SOAR specialist expedites discharges by implementing the SOAR model, a SAMHSA promising practice, within the hospital's multidisciplinary team.

### Context

A significant number of individuals with severe mental health conditions and a history of homelessness experience prolonged stays in state psychiatric hospitals. Ninety percent of this population in Maryland are forensic patients, committed when a judge has questioned their competency to stand trial. Once cleared legally and medically for release, a variety of factors complicate discharge planning efforts, stymying an effective care transition. These issues consistently include complex disentanglements of Social Security and health insurance benefits. Prior to the SOAR Specialist, the hospital social workers did not have the capacity to address these challenges due to their clinical and administrative responsibilities.

### Results

From January 2015 through April 2016, 130 individuals were referred to the SOAR specialist for assistance with SSI/SSDI.



54%

Had received SSI/SSDI in the past and could reactivate their benefits upon discharge. The SOAR benefits specialist assisted with determining prior benefits status, which avoided previously experienced complicated, labor-intensive and costly delays in discharge.

28%

Were approved for SSI/SSDI through SOAR in an average of 60 days, expediting discharge. The SOAR Specialist ensured approvals by collecting and submitting thorough medical evidence.

15%

Did not receive assistance due to facility transfer or change in criminal status.

3%

Did not meet symptom or functional criteria required for SOAR.

### Cost Avoidance

**\$600 -**

The cost to Spring Grove per inpatient per day.

**\$54,000 -**

The annual grant to fund a SOAR specialist

The hospital began experiencing cost avoidance after **30 patients** left the hospital **3 days** earlier than they would have without SOAR.



### Next Steps

Based on the success of this program, the model is being replicated at Springfield Hospital Center, the second largest state psychiatric hospital in Maryland. The Maryland SOAR state planning team is currently pursuing opportunities to replicate the model in other criminal justice settings. The arrangement prevents homelessness by ensuring access to public benefits, housing, and health insurance prior to discharge into the community.

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### Further Information

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