



Monthly Newsletter

February 2011

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Always remember to enter your SOAR cases into HMIS as soon as you are notified of a decision!

SOAR Technical Assistance Webinars

Last month, the National SOAR Technical Assistance Center hosted a webinar featuring presenters from around the country, sharing their tips on how to write medical summary reports. To watch this webinar, go to www.prainc.com/soar and look for the link to the Medical Summary Reports Webinar in the "What's New" box.



The next webinar, on collecting medical records, will be held on March 1st from 3 - 4:30 pm. Topics to be covered include strategies for collecting records, collaborating with local hospitals, and collecting records at no cost. This webinar is FREE, and you can register by emailing Suzy Sodergren at ssodergren@prainc.com with your name, agency, city and state.

Upcoming Training Dates

Refresher Trainings

- Port Huron - March 1st, 1 - 4:30 pm
- Kalamazoo - March 18th, 9 am - 12:30 pm
- Wayne County - March 23rd, 1 pm - 4:30 pm
- Muskegon - March 30th, 9 am - 12:30 pm
- Genesee County - April (TBA)

Stepping Stones to Recovery 2-Day Trainings
Two trainings will be scheduled for May in the Detroit and Lansing areas.

SOAR Community Planning Meetings
Please be on the lookout for these, and contact us if you would like to schedule one in your area.

Feel free to contact us if your community is in need of a SOAR Refresher Training, Community Planning Meeting, or any other specific technical assistance. Email Nickie Perera at PereraV@michigan.gov with any questions.

Electronic Benefit Payments

In December 2010, the U.S. Department of Treasury announced that all federal benefit payments will soon be paid electronically:

- Those applying for benefits on or after May 1, 2011, will have to choose an electronic payment method at the time they apply for benefits (either by direct deposit to a bank account, or payments via Direct Express Debit MasterCard card)
- Those currently receiving Social Security benefits will have until March 1, 2013, to choose an electronic payment method. Anyone who does not make the switch by this date will receive their benefit payments via the Direct Express card.



The Go Direct campaign is sponsored by the U.S. Dept. of Treasury, and provides bank accounts and Debit Express cards to anyone receiving federal benefits. Visit the campaign's website at www.GoDirect.org for more information. Below are the answers to some frequently asked questions:

- The Go Direct campaign encourages the use of direct deposit with a benefit recipient's own bank or credit union account.
 - There are no fees associated with having their benefits directly deposited into their own account.
- As for the Direct Express Debit Mastercard most services are free - there are some fees associated with optional services:
 - There are no sign-up fees, no monthly fees and no overdraft fees.
 - A sample of services provided free of charge include:
 - Purchases at retail locations and cash back with purchases
 - Cash withdrawals through tellers at MasterCard member banks and credit unions
 - One free ATM cash withdrawal with each deposit
 - If they receive both Social Security and SSI then they receive two per month
 - Balance inquiries at ATMs, by phone or online
 - Optional deposit notification by phone, email or text message
 - Card replacement - one each year
 - Fees for optional services include:
 - ATM cash withdrawal outside the MasterCard member banks and credit unions - \$0.90 /each withdrawal; Surcharge by ATM owner
 - ATM cash withdrawal after the one free - \$0.90/ each withdrawal
 - Monthly paper statement mailed to recipient - \$0.75 each month
 - Card replacement after one free - \$4.00/ \$13.50 for overnight delivery

SSA Award Recipient

At the SOAR Conference in October 2010, Social Security Administration offices from around the state nominated the SOAR trainees that they felt showed exceptional leadership. Each month, we will feature one of these nominees in our newsletter. This month, the SOAR Across Michigan Initiative would like to congratulate **Jim Cyphers** at Disability Connections on his success and commitment to SOAR.

Words from the nominating SSA representative:



“Jim Cyphers, caseworker with Disability Connections in Jackson has done an excellent job of making use of the SOAR program to expedite the claims process for those who are homeless and filing for disability benefits in the Jackson area. He has made more referrals than any other advocate in the Jackson area. He is always polite and professional in his communications with our office and really demonstrates care and concern for his clients. He is diligent in getting SOAR cases referred and persistent in working with DDS and ODAR to make sure that all of the medical information is considered and that cases are expedited. He is a real pleasure to work with and is a true asset to the Jackson community.”

--Submitted by Jackson, MI SSA Office

Ten Steps of a SOAR Case

Need a little cheat sheet to help you with your SOAR cases? See “Ten Steps of a SOAR Case,” attached to this newsletter, for a quick reference guide for working through SOAR applications. Thanks to SOAR trainer John Loring for putting this together!

Collecting Medical Records from DOC

Obtaining medical records from the Michigan Department of Corrections:

- Duane Waters Hospital in Jackson
- Contact Connie Clark at 517-780-5936 (phone)
- Health Info Services at 517-780-5724 (fax)
- Please address faxes to “Attn: Medical Records”

Monthly Reminders

Please remember to enter case decisions into HMIS. This is our way of tracking approvals and denials, and will allow us to provide more accurate statistics for your region, and statewide.

If you have any questions about the SOAR Across Michigan Initiative, please contact:

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