



POLICY RESEARCH ASSOCIATES, INC.

IMPACT REPORT

2020



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2020 Project Highlights



Publication and Webinar Explore SOAR Integration in Criminal Justice Reentry Programs

The SAMHSA Supplemental Security Income (SSI)/Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) Technical Assistance Center released a new **issue brief** and hosted a **webinar** outlining how SOAR can be integrated into criminal justice settings to promote post-release success. The issue brief, *SOAR Works for Individuals Involved in the Criminal Justice System*, and the webinar provide local corrections and community transition staff with methods to integrate benefit options into community reentry strategies for people with serious mental illness and co-occurring disorders. Using the SOAR model as a reentry tool can result in increased access to income, housing, and treatment for people with serious mental illness and co-occurring disorders.



Policy Academy to Prevent Suicide among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families Hosted

On February 25-27, 2020, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) hosted the inaugural 2020 Governor's Challenge Policy Academy meeting in Washington, DC. SAMHSA's Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF) Technical Assistance Center facilitated the meeting for six state teams—Florida, Georgia, Nevada, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Pennsylvania. The goal of the Policy Academy process is to strengthen statewide behavioral healthcare systems and suicide prevention services for SMVF through collaboration at the federal, state, and local levels. The Policy Academy meeting facilitated the development of state action plans and logic models informed by plenary sessions, concurrent workshops, and multiple facilitated team work sessions.



NCYOJ Releases Brief on Caring for Youth with Behavioral Health Needs in the Juvenile Justice System

The National Center for Youth Opportunity and Justice has released the Research to Practice Brief, ***Caring for Youth with Behavioral Health Needs in the Juvenile Justice System: Improving Knowledge and Skills of the Professionals Who Supervise Them***. This brief highlights the need for juvenile justice staff to receive training on how to interact with youth with behavioral health conditions effectively. The brief offers the Mental Health Training for Juvenile Justice (MHT-JJ) as a potential training solution. The MHT-JJ is an 8-hour, interactive training that covers adolescent development, childhood trauma, mental and substance use disorders, effective interventions, practical strategies for working with youth and their families, and self-care approaches.

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Policy Research, Inc. Hosts Virtual Town Halls to Support Safety and Justice Challenge Sites During COVID-19 Pandemic

Throughout May and June 2020, Policy Research, Inc., in its capacity as a technical assistance provider to the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's Safety and Justice Challenge, hosted a series of virtual town halls for Network Sites. These town halls focused on strengthening behavioral health strategies to reduce the misuse and overuse of jails. Topics in the series included local lessons learned in reentry programs, funding strategies, competence restoration, and more. In addition, a special COVID-19 town hall was produced to highlight strategies to safely reduce jail populations in response to the pandemic.



ARDRAW Expands Cohort, Awards Grants to 16 Researchers

The Analyzing Relationships Between Disability, Rehabilitation, and Work (ARDRAW) Small Grant Program re-opened its 2020-2021 application period for student researchers this spring. The ARDRAW Small Grant Program is a 1-year, \$10,000 stipend program awarded to graduate-level students to conduct supervised, independent research designed to foster new analysis of work, rehabilitation, and disability issues, which may develop innovative and fresh perspectives on disability. Six researchers were selected to join the 2020-2021 cohort, joining 10 previously selected researchers. These new researchers make the 2020-2021 cohort the largest cohort that ARDRAW has supported since its inception in 2018. View the cohort's **project topics** on the ARDRAW website to learn more.



Virtual Criminal Justice/Behavioral Health Cross-Systems Workshops Allow Communities to Map Local Systems

To facilitate systems transformation while responding safely to the COVID-19 pandemic, Policy Research Associates reimagined its Sequential Intercept Model (SIM) Mapping Workshops for virtual delivery. It developed a targeted virtual event model, reformulating the 1.5-day technical assistance delivery into a series of virtual criminal justice/behavioral health cross-systems workshops attended by local stakeholders. This process was piloted with representatives from Story County, Iowa. While not a replacement for the full in-person SIM Mapping Workshop, the virtual model facilitated information sharing, resource identification, and partnership development, allowing communities to map their systems while keeping a safe social distance.

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Virtual Policy Academies to Prevent Suicide among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families

In August 2020, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and SAMHSA hosted two virtual Governor's Challenge Policy Academies. SAMHSA's SMVF Technical Assistance Center facilitated both meetings. Seven state teams—Illinois, Kentucky, New York, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Washington, and Wisconsin—attended the first meeting, held August 4–6, 2020, and seven state teams—Alabama, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, South Carolina, and West Virginia—attended the second meeting held August 18–20, 2020. The goal of the Policy Academy process is to strengthen statewide behavioral healthcare systems and suicide prevention services for SMVF through collaboration at the federal, state, and local levels. The virtual Policy Academy meetings facilitated the development of strategic plans informed by plenary sessions, concurrent workshops, and multiple facilitated team work sessions.



SAMHSA's GAINS Center Hosts Four Communities of Practice to Advance Strategic Planning in Local Communities

SAMHSA's GAINS Center for Behavioral Health and Justice Transformation convened Communities of Practice (CoPs) to work intensively with selected communities across four topics: competence to stand trial/competence restoration, equity and inclusion in adult drug courts, using the SIM to guide medication-assisted treatment implementation in adult drug courts, and improving recovery support services for people with substance use disorders returning from jail or prison. Communities for each CoP were selected through a competitive solicitation process. Through virtual meetings, strategic planning sessions, and direct technical assistance from subject-matter experts, each participating community developed strategic plans to address the issue of focus in their community by using promising, best, and evidence-based practices.



PRA Well-Being Releases *Take Charge! Workbook*

PRA Well-Being has released a new addition to its product portfolio, ***Take Charge! A Workbook to Enhance Well-Being With the Eight Dimensions of Wellness***. This workbook offers users a self-paced, guided exploration of each of the Eight Dimensions of Wellness. *Take Charge!* contains information, ideas, and strategies for promoting both prevention and recovery and is appropriate for both individuals and behavioral health organizations. With space for responding to written prompts and even coloring, the workbook provides users with the opportunity to get curious about their strengths and barriers and create action plans for improving personal well-being.

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Homeless and Housing Resource Center Launches, Hosts Webinar on Eviction Prevention

In September 2020, Policy Research launched the SAMHSA-funded Homeless and Housing Resource Center (HHRC). HHRC works in partnership with national experts in homelessness, mental health, and substance use services to develop up-to-date, comprehensive toolkits, webinars, and self-paced online trainings. HHRC provides training on housing and treatment models focused on adults, children, and families who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness who have serious mental illness, serious emotional disturbance, substance use disorders, and co-occurring disorders. As part of its initial activities, HHRC hosted a webinar on December 16, 2020, titled “**Eviction Prevention and Housing Retention During and After COVID-19**.” This webinar had 6,938 registrants and 3,435 attendees.



SAMHSA's GAINS Center Hosts State Summit on Behavioral Health and Justice for the State of Maryland

The Maryland Governor’s Commission to Study Mental and Behavioral Health requested SAMHSA’s GAINS Center’s assistance with planning and hosting a state summit focusing on issues related to behavioral health and the justice system. The Maryland State Summit on Behavioral Health and the Justice System was held November 17-18, 2020, and focused on introducing the Sequential Intercept Model as a strategic planning tool to inform legislation, policy, planning, and funding; informing state and local stakeholders about best practices in the behavioral health and criminal justice fields; identifying existing resources and gaps throughout the state; and increasing coordination and collaboration among state and local stakeholders from the criminal justice and behavioral health systems.



SOAR TA Center Releases 2020 National Outcomes, Maintains 65 Percent Approval Rate on Initial Applications

In December 2020, the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center released the **2020 National SOAR Outcomes** to the field. The 2020 National SOAR Outcomes provide a snapshot of all Supplemental Security Income (SSI)/Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) applications submitted using the SOAR model from 2006 through June 30, 2020! In the 2020 reporting period, decisions on SOAR-assisted initial SSI/SSDI applications were received in an average of 115 days with an allowance rate of 65 percent. Decisions on SOAR-assisted appeals were received in an average of 211 days with an allowance rate of 50 percent (a 19.05-percent increase from 2019!). Over the last 15 years, the SOAR model has been used to assist 55,210 people who were experiencing or at risk of homelessness gain access to the Social Security Administration’s disability benefit programs.