

Standard SOAR Process

STEPS TO COMPLETING A CHILD SSI APPLICATION USING THE SOAR MODEL

After completing the *SOAR Online Course: Child Curriculum*, case workers assisting child SSI applicants should complete the following steps as part of a standard SOAR workflow. In many states and communities, there is an established *SOAR Process*ⁱ for the submission and processing of SOAR-assisted SSI applications. In other areas, the Social Security Administration (SSA) and Disability Determination Services (DDS) may not yet know about the SOAR initiative. Either way, case workers can use the SOAR model to submit quality and complete child SSI applications efficiently and effectively.

Step One: Receive Referral

- Request that external providers use the *SOAR Referral Application Tool-Child SSI*ⁱⁱ to make referrals.
- Track referrals received in the *SOAR Referral Tracking Worksheet-Child*.
- Review *Identifying SOAR Applicants for Children's SSI*, [SSA's Listing of Impairments](#), and medical records shared by the referring source to help determine whether the applicant is potentially eligible.
- If applicable:
 - If the potential applicant or their parent/caregiverⁱⁱⁱ is unsure whether the child has any prior or pending applications, this can be determined by submitting the [SSA-3288: Consent for Release of Information](#)^{iv} to SSA. This must be mailed or hand-delivered to the local SSA field office, unless a prior agreement has been established to submit via fax or a secure email partnership. Alternatively, you can call SSA with the applicant's parent/caregiver present at 1-800-772-1213 to gather basic information about pending claims.
 - If you need additional medical information before deciding whether to assist with the claim, request treatment records (see Step 3).
- If it is an appropriate referral, schedule an intake meeting and proceed to Step 2. If you are unable to assist with the application, provide information on alternative resources, including [Form SSA-4: Information You Need To Apply for Child's Benefits](#).

Step Two: Complete SOAR Intake

- Use the *SOAR Initial Meeting Worksheet-Child SSI* to gather information and take notes.
- Have the parent/caregiver sign agency releases for all collateral sources, (i.e., family members, teachers, etc.).
- Have the parent/caregiver sign **two** release forms for each treatment provider: your agency release (*Sample Agency Authorization for Release of Medical Information*) **and** an [SSA-827: Authorization to Disclose Information to the Social Security Administration](#). Signing both releases provides HIPAA-compliant "compound authorization" which allows you to gather records and release them to SSA.
- Complete and have the parent/caregiver sign the [SSA-1696: Appointment of Representative](#). **YOU WILL SUBMIT THIS FORM WITH THE COMPLETE APPLICATION PACKET (STEP 9).**
- Schedule weekly meetings with the applicant and/or their parent/caregiver before the end of the SOAR intake meeting.

Step Three: Request Records from Treatment Sources

- [Request treatment records](#) from one year prior to the onset of disability and any older records that may have information supporting the onset of the applicant's symptoms.
- Send a records request packet to each treatment source:
 - Cover Letter (*Sample Medical Records Request Cover Letter*)
 - Your agency release
 - SSA-827: Authorization to Disclose Information to the Social Security Administration
 - Provider-specific release (if applicable)
- Record the submitted requests in the *Medical Records Tracking Spreadsheet*.
 - Follow up after one week for any records not yet received.
- Review all records received. Confirm symptoms correspond with SSA's Listing of Impairments.
 - If symptoms are documented in the records, continue to Step 4.
 - If symptoms are not documented but are easily observed, continue to Step 4 and recommend a consultative exam in the Medical Summary Report (MSR).
 - If symptoms are not documented and not easily observed, encourage the applicant to seek treatment and revisit the application process when additional supporting records are available.

Step Four: Establish Protective Filing Date (PFD)

- [Establish the PFD](#) by **initiating** the Online Child Disability Report.
 - Go to [SSA's Website](#) and click "Apply for Benefits."
 - Select "A child (under age 18)," and "Supplemental Security Income for Disability," then click "Learn how to apply."
 - Click "Apply Online," and then "Start the Report."
 - Continue through the next few pages of instructions and answer the "Should You Complete the Report" questions.
- After providing basic identifying information about the applicant, a **re-entry number** will be assigned.
 - **DO NOT PROCEED PAST THIS SCREEN** until you are prepared to submit the complete application packet (Step 8).
 - **PRINT THE WEBPAGE AND WRITE DOWN THE RE-ENTRY NUMBER.** You will not be able to get back into the application without it!
 - Choose "Save & Exit."
- You now have **60 days** to complete and submit the SSI application packet.
- You may receive a Protective Filing Closeout letter from SSA. This is simply a notice that they have not received the complete application. You can proceed with preparing the application.

Step Five: Continue to Gather Supporting Documentation

Steps 5 and 6 will be done in conjunction with one another. Best practices recommend completing one form at each weekly meeting.

- Meet with the parent/caregiver weekly using the *Medical Summary Report (MSR) Interview Guide*.
- Gather information and record it in the appropriate section of the *MSR Template*.
- Continue to review medical treatment, education, and other records as they come in.
- Continue follow-up efforts for any outstanding records requests.

Step Six: Complete SSI Application Forms

Sign forms in blue ink to distinguish them as originals. Keep a copy of each signed form in the applicant's file.

- [SSA-8000: Application for Supplemental Security Income](#): The parent/caregiver will sign the paper form and submit it with the complete packet (Step 9).
- [SSA-3820: Child Disability Report](#): Use the paper form as a worksheet and transfer information to the online application when ready to submit (Step 8).
- [SSA-8010](#): Statement of Income and Resources (if applicable)
- [SSA-3375](#), [3376](#), [3377](#), [3378](#), or [3379](#): Child Function Reports (by Age) (if applicable)
- [SSA-5665](#): Teacher Questionnaire (if applicable)

Step Seven: Complete the Medical Summary Report

- Finish writing the MSR and send it to your [SAMHSA SOAR TA Center Liaison](#) for review.
- Send the final MSR to the child's primary treatment provider for review and a co-signature.
 - Plan for at least a one-week turnaround time for obtaining a provider's co-signature.
 - A co-signature by an [Acceptable Medical Source \(AMS\)](#) raises the MSR from "collateral information" to "medical evidence."

Step Eight: Submit the Online Disability Benefits Application

- Complete the Online Child Disability Report **within 60 days** of setting the PFD.
 - Go to [SSA's website](#) and click "Apply for benefits."
 - Select "A child (under age 18)," and "Supplemental Security Income for Disability," then click "Learn how to apply."
 - Click "Finish existing application" and then "Go back to the Report I Already Started."
 - Enter the child's Social Security Number and the re-entry number you received when you set the PFD.
- Use the information collected on the paper SSA-3820 to complete the online report:
 - Part 1: Background Information
 - Part 2: Disability Information
 - Enter the following information in the Remarks section:
 - "SOAR Application – Packet to Follow on or before [Date]"
 - "Represented by [SOAR case worker name]"
 - "Applicant is experiencing homelessness" (if they meet [SSA's definition](#)).
 - **THE APPLICANT'S PARENT/CAREGIVER MUST BE WITH YOU TO ELECTRONICALLY SIGN THE APPLICATION.**
 - Part 3: Electronically sign the Medical Release (SSA-827)

Step Nine: Submit the Paper Application Packet

- Submit the complete paper packet to SSA **no more than two days** after submitting the Online Child Disability Report.
- Include the following documents in the complete SOAR packet:
 - [SOAR Checklist for Initial Claims](#)
 - SSA-827: Authorization to Disclose Information to the Social Security Administration
 - SSA-1696: Appointment of Representative
 - SSA-8000: Application for Supplemental Security Income

- SSA-8010: Statement of Income and Resources (if applicable)
- SSA-3375, 3376, 3377, 3378, or 3379: Child Function Report (by Age) (if applicable).
- SSA-5665: Teacher Questionnaire (if applicable)
- Submit the packet via **one** of the following methods:
 - Mail to the local SSA field office.
 - Deliver to an SSA drop-box (where available).
 - Deliver the packet in person: Contact SSA and request an appointment. *This is not a request for an applicant interview; it is only for the case worker to submit the application packet.* Begin attempts to contact SSA at least 1-2 weeks before the 60-day deadline to allow for potential scheduling conflicts. (This may not be an option at all offices.)
- **NOTE:** Medical records, educational records, and the MSR are **not** submitted to SSA, but rather to DDS once a disability examiner has been assigned.
 - Use [Electronic Records Express \(ERE\)](#) or request a bar-coded cover sheet from DDS and submit via fax.

Step Ten: SSA and DDS Process the Claim

Once the online **and** paper application packet have been submitted, [the disability determination process begins](#):

- **SSA** will assign the case to a claims specialist to determine non-medical eligibility. If the applicant meets non-medical eligibility, SSA will transfer the case to DDS.
- **DDS** will assign the claim to a disability examiner to determine medical eligibility. DDS will review all medical records submitted, including the MSR. If necessary, DDS can request additional treatment records or schedule a consultative exam (CE). The applicant may also be asked to submit additional forms.

While the claim is being processed, the **SOAR case worker** must follow up with SSA and DDS:

- Obtain contact information for the SSA claims specialist and DDS examiner and stay in contact!
- Let them know you are available to answer questions or provide additional information.
- If more than 60 days have passed since medical records have been submitted to DDS, follow up with the examiner to inquire whether additional information is needed.
- If a CE is scheduled, the SOAR case worker and the applicant's parent/caregiver will be notified by mail. Contact DDS to confirm that the applicant will attend the appointment.

SOAR practitioners should contact their SAMHSA SOAR TA Center Liaison if they experience any difficulties maintaining this communication.

Local or Customized SOAR Process

In many states and communities, SOAR Leaders have collaborated with SSA and DDS to establish a *SOAR Process* for the submission and processing of SOAR-assisted SSI applications. This may include additional steps or special handling procedures that would be implemented by SSA/DDS during the application processing, such as:

- Dedicated SSA Claims Specialists/DDS Disability Examiners
- Homeless Flag with "SOAR" in the Remarks for special handling
- Secure Email Partnership
- Designated contacts for communication about claims

Step Eleven: A Decision is Made

- SSA will send a letter to the SOAR case worker and the applicant and/or their parent/caregiver notifying them of the decision.
- If the case is approved, SSA will schedule a Preeffortuation Review Contact (PERC) appointment to set up payments.
 - If SSA determines that the applicant requires a Representative Payee to help manage their benefits, an appointment will be scheduled to set up payee arrangements. *Most child SSI recipients will be required to have a payee*, and in many cases, this will be the parent/caregiver.
 - For unaccompanied youth (age 15 or older)^v who are not required to have a payee, benefits may be directly deposited into the applicant's bank account.
- If the case is denied, SSA will send a letter explaining why the unfavorable decision was made.
 - Read more about [reviewing denial notices](#) and the [appeals process](#).

Step Twelve: Track Your Outcomes

- Track the outcomes of your SOAR-assisted SSI applications in the [SOAR Online Application Tracking \(OAT\) system](#).
- OAT is a free, web-based program that is easy to use, and HIPAA compliant.
- Contact your [State Team Lead or SOAR TA Center Liaison](#) to find out more.

ⁱ See [Best Practices for Collaborating with SSA and DDS](#) and [Benefits of SOAR Collaboration with SSA and DDS](#).

ⁱⁱ [SOAR Tools and Worksheets](#) are *noted with italics*.

ⁱⁱⁱ In most cases, the applicant's parent/caregiver will sign forms on behalf of the child. Exceptions include youth who are pregnant, head of household, emancipated, or living on their own and not receiving support from a parent or caregiver.

^{iv} Review [sample completed forms](#) and [guidance for completing forms](#).

^v SSA will determine if a youth is able to receive their payments directly. See [SSA POMS on determining capability in children](#).