

# SOAR Interview Guide

## Section 1: The Basics

Name:

DOB/Age:

SSN:

Residential Address:

Mailing Address:

Phone #:

What is the best way to reach you?

## Section II. Personal History

### A. Current and Past Living Situations; Homelessness History

It is important to know where the person is living for a number of reasons, including documenting homelessness or risk of homelessness. This information might also be linked to functioning, since the ability to function effectively often is affected by housing status.

Sample questions:

- *Where do you live or stay? With whom?*
- *Where did you live prior to where you are now?*
- *Have you ever lived independently? What was that like for you? Why did you leave that situation?*
- *Were there other times you were homeless, after leaving one place and before finding another?*

For each living situation:

- *How did it go living there?*
- *Were there supports in place to help maintain the housing?*
- *What made you decide to move?*

### B. Family Background

Sample topics/questions:

- *Place of birth, mother's full maiden name, father's name*

- *Are you currently married or in a relationship? If yes, are you living together? When/where did you marry? If separated or divorced, when/where? Any other previous marriages?*

Questions about children might include:

- *Do you have any children? How many? Ages?*
- *What is your relationship with them now?*
- *Are you able to have contact with your children?*
- *If not, would you like to have contact with your children?*

Make these inquiries gently. Do not assume that the person wants to have contact with their children.

### **C. Education**

Educational history can provide clues to a person's past and present functioning. It is helpful to understand how a person learns and processes information and whether the person received services in the school setting for intellectual or behavioral issues. A lack of cognitive and behavioral development will influence a person's ability to learn new work skills.

Sample questions:

- *What was the last grade or level that you completed?*
- *Did you repeat any grades? If so, which one(s) and why?*
- *What made you decide to leave school? What was going on then?*
- *Were there any subjects which you needed a little extra work or some help?*

### **D. Trauma/Victimization**

There are very high rates of trauma and victimization (past and present) in both women and men who are experiencing homelessness and this trauma can affect a person's current functioning.

Sample questions:

- *Was there ever a time in the past or recently when something really bad or very upsetting happened to you? You don't need to give me any details. Does it still bother you?*
- *Do you feel safe or are you generally afraid? Of anyone or anything in particular?*

## **Section III: Occupational History**

### **A. Employment History**

DDS/BDD is interested in work over the past 15 years, and details of each job experience. If the person does not have a lengthy work history, learn as much as possible about any employment they had. NOTE: SSA can provide a report of the person's earnings if requested. Contacting former employers, with the applicant's permission, may also provide useful evidence.

Sample questions for each job (including any supported employment):

- *When did you work there? What did you do?*
- *How long did you work there?*
- *What did you like about working there? Dislike?*
- *What were your relationships like with your co-workers?*
- *Did you have any problems at the job with completing tasks or working with others?*
- *What made you leave the position?*

## **B. Military Service History (if applicable)**

Military service can provide clues to how the individual responded to a structured environment, including orders and instructions, stress, and interpersonal relationships with peers and authority figures. It can also be a source of medical records, periods of sobriety, and information about PTSD or TBI symptoms.

Sample questions:

- *Were you ever in the military? What branch of service were you in and what made you decide to join?*
- *What did you do? Did you get any special training while in the military?*
- *What type of discharge did you receive? If less than honorable, ask why.*
- *While in the service, were you treated for any illnesses or were you in any hospitals?*
- *Were you exposed to blasts, Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), or did you ever lose consciousness?*
- *Did you experience anything in the military that you still think about or that bothers you?*

## **Section IV: Physical Health**

It is important to find out about any illnesses or injuries that could result in ongoing impairment. Applicants may be found eligible based on a combination of illnesses, so it is important to be comprehensive.

Sample questions:

- *Are you currently being treated for any physical health problems? What are they?*
- *Have you ever been hospitalized for any physical health problems? Where? When? For how long? What happened?*
- *Have you ever fallen, been hit, been in a fight, or been in an accident where you were knocked out? What happened? Did you go to a doctor or hospital?*
- *Do you have any dizziness, headaches, difficulty paying attention, confusion? Have you had treatment for any of these?*
- *Have you ever had any surgery? What was the result?*
- *Have you noticed anything about your health that concerns you?*
- *Do you have any problems with walking/standing/sitting? How long/how far can you walk continuously in one stretch without stopping to rest?*
  - *How long can you stand continuously in one stretch of time?*
  - *What happens if you try to sit too long?*

## Section V: Psychiatric History and Treatment

Inquiries about past or current psychiatric symptoms and treatment must be done with sensitivity. Avoid using jargon. Elicit as much detail as possible about what happened and what the person experienced. Determine (as best as possible) the chronological occurrence of symptoms and treatment.

Sample questions:

- *Are you currently being treated for any mental health problems? Can you tell me more about that?*
- *Where do you go to the doctor for your mental health struggles?*
- *Have you ever been hospitalized for any mental health problems? Where? When? For how long? What happened*
- *Did you ever experience these problems in jail? What help did you receive?*

### **A. Symptoms (no need to ask all of these questions, but some can be helpful in gaining more info about the client's psychiatric impairment)**

Sample questions:

- *Describe how you feel day-to-day. Are some days better or worse than others?*
- *When did you first notice these difficulties?*
- *Does the individual have difficulty sitting still? Does he or she seem agitated? Is the person noticeably slow in activity? Describe.*
- *How do you sleep at night? If you don't sleep well, what happens?*
- *Do you ever notice yourself feeling very nervous with shaking hands, racing heart, sweaty palms, and a general unsettled feeling? When does this happen?*
- *Give me some examples of things or activities that you find stressful or that bring on a panic attack.*
- *Do you ever feel anxious for no apparent reason?*
  
- *Do you ever find it difficult to think clearly or to organize your thoughts?*

*Psychotic Symptoms/Paranoia*

- *Sometimes people notice that they hear voices or noises that other people say they don't hear. Does this happen to you? What do you notice?*
- *Sometimes people also see things that other people say they don't see. Does this ever happen to you? What do you see?*
- *Do you sometimes feel that you aren't yourself? Or that you are another person?*
- *Do you ever feel that people are talking about you behind your back?*
- *Do you ever feel that someone is watching you?*

### **B. Psychiatric Treatment History**

Explore all treatment sources and gather as much specific information as possible. If someone does not remember where they have been treated, you may need to offer a list of commonly used facilities to jog their memory. You can also ask about what town that they were in, the

street it was on, the color of the building, etc. Use other sources: friends, family, other service providers, the internet, etc. Gather information about:

- Emergency room visits
- Past psychiatric hospitalizations
- Outpatient services: current counselor, therapist or psychiatrist
- Supportive services: case management
- Medications: past and present, side effects
- Treatment during incarceration