

Building a Collaborative Relationship with Your SSA

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Let's start with some questions: Do you know what the acronym "SSA" stands for? Do you know who your SSA is? Why would you want a relationship with your SSA?

A SSA, or "Single State Authority," is "the entity designated by the Governor or chief executive officer of a State as the single State administrative authority responsible for the planning, development, implementation, monitoring, regulation, and evaluation of substance [use disorder] services." 34 U.S. Code § 60521(e). This is the person or entity who administrates the Substance Abuse, Prevention and Treatment (SAPT) Block grant and may also be the administrator of the Mental Health Block Grant and other federal funds received by the state. Each state and jurisdiction has a lead that manages these federally-funded programs for prevention, addiction, and recovery support, and each state and jurisdiction has its own individual statutes, rules and regulations that govern the SSA.

An SSA's responsibilities include understanding the needs in its respective state or jurisdiction and disseminating funding to bring prevention, treatment, and recovery services to meet those needs. The SSA is, for example, responsible for coordinating the efforts and disseminating the funds authorized by the Comprehensive Addiction Recovery Act of 2016 (Public Law 114-198) and the 21st Century Cures Act (Public Law 114-255), which enables programs to enhance opioid prevention and education programs, provide naloxone to first responders, and more.

With the additional funds that Congress has allocated in 2020 and 2021, including the recent American Rescue Act, states are receiving almost three times the amount funding that has been allocated in the past. States work with the stakeholders in their state to develop and implement annual and bi-annual plans for state-wide services. With such a rise in funds, it is vital that those of you who play a part in service delivery in your state as a provider of services work together with your SSA and discuss what they see as the needs and priorities in your state. Relate back to your SSA what you see and what you experience in the community you serve; the experience of addiction professionals is essential in the development of a state-wide plan.

You may ask, what can I share about our needs? Let's begin with the need for a developed and trained workforce. Are there enough addiction-specific trained counselors in your community? Is there a clear and funded pathway for every level of the continuum of care? Do you have adequate compensation and benefits or would an increase in pay and benefits ensure a more stable workforce? Consider seeking funding for programs at the state level to help pay for education before certification or licensure is reached or for developing a state-wide recruitment plan.

What other areas of support does your state and your community need? Clinical supervision is another large need in order to protect the public with well-supervised SUD counselors and requires SUD skills and competencies that go beyond the usual skills counselors gain in basic



counseling programs. How can clinical supervision training opportunities be improved in your state or community? Additionally, telehealth supports, including training, software and hardware, and technical assistance is still needed as we continue to expand our telehealth capabilities. Has your state invested in providing support for telehealth for providers? Further, adolescent treatment services are generally diminished across the board, elder specific treatment is needed, and school-based services for students returning to school are essential. The list of needs goes on and on. The good news is that there are resources available from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and your state can ask for technical assistance to help your community develop these programs.

There are certainly other ideas and models that would help your community beyond what is shared in this article. NAADAC and your state affiliate are here to be a resource to you as you work to develop the relationship with your SSA. I encourage you to find out who your SSA is and work with them to build a stronger workforce and support the development of SUD services. If you are not sure who to contact or how to begin that conversation, please contact me. Together, we can make a difference!



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