

FAQ: SOAR

SOAR is a community-wide collaborative working to ensure that children from birth to 18 years of age across Martin Luther King County are prepared for and successful in school and life. As of October 1, 2009 the YWCA becomes SOAR's new host agency. From 2004 to 2009, SOAR has been hosted by United Way of King County, which expects to continue as a funder and advocate of the program as the YWCA becomes SOAR's new host agency.

What is SOAR?

SOAR is a community collaborative that works to address critical issues facing children, youth and families across King County. SOAR works in partnership with more than 1,000 representatives from government, community organizations, schools, churches and businesses. SOAR is committed to assuring that every child in King County is ready for school and that school-age children are healthy and supported in their development. This is done by working closely and effectively with education systems, educators, childcare providers, parents, caregivers, and communities.

Why is SOAR moving from the United Way to the YWCA?

Historically, United Way of King County serves as an incubator for innovative programs that can become independent or be integrated into an organization with an aligned mission. Leadership Tomorrow is an example, and now, too, SOAR. United Way has provided significant support to SOAR for the past five years (2004-2009), including hosting the program and helping develop its strategy and community relationships. With the program now established, successful, and poised for even greater impact, it is a natural shift for the program to align with the YWCA, whose mission meets SOAR's objectives. The YWCA will give SOAR the support it needs to be a more effective, county-wide program. As SOAR continues to succeed United Way of King County expects to remain a champion and financial backer.

How was the YWCA selected to administer SOAR?

The SOAR Coordinating Committee selected the YWCA among several other agencies because of mission fit and complementary programming. School's Out Washington, a program of the YWCA, has been working in coordination with SOAR for more than five years. SOAR aligns well with the YWCA mission of empowering women and families and working toward systemic change that will benefit the community for generations to come. The YWCA has a solid track record in nurturing emerging and growing nonprofit programs and initiatives and helping them succeed. Examples include School's Out Washington, Dress for Success, Babes Network, and Girls First.

Will SOAR's focus change?

SOAR will continue to focus its efforts on supporting children and youth age 0-18 under the guidance of the SOAR Coordinating Committee. The YWCA strongly supports SOAR's focus and is committed to strengthening SOAR's ability to reach its goal of serving all of King County's children. SOAR and the community have developed two Action Agendas that outline community-wide goals, priorities and strategies for ensuring children and youth from birth to age eighteen can thrive and succeed. The Action

Agendas focus on two different age groups: early childhood (birth to five years old) and school-age (ages six to eighteen). Two publications that explain the goals for each agenda are available at SOAR's website: www.childrenandyouth.org.

What added benefits will SOAR gain through an association with the YWCA?

In addition to being aligned with one of the community's most respected human service agencies, SOAR will be located at School's Out Washington, a YWCA facility, and have access to administrative support. SOAR will continue to work closely with School's Out Washington in supporting youth during out-of-school times, as well as continuing its effective work with early childhood and school readiness partners.

We see SOAR's move to YWCA beneficial for several reasons.

1. SOAR will work with local programs that the YWCA offers and will have access to national initiatives and programs serving women and families.
2. Through SOAR's partnership with School's Out Washington, the program will have expanded access to state-wide initiatives and programs, with the possibility of impacting regional children and youth systems.
3. SOAR's action agendas will reach a greater audience, which increases the possibility for impacting national, regional, state and local systems change for children and youth.