



COMPUTERIZED
ASSESSMENT
— AND —
REFERRAL SYSTEM

User Manual for CARS Connect



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1. Introduction

The Computerized Assessment and Referral System (CARS) is a computer-guided interview for comprehensive mental health and psychosocial screening. CARS is the result of a collaboration between the [Division on Addiction](#) and the [Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility \(FAAR\)](#).

CARS Connect is a web-based version of CARS that provides comprehensive screening for 17 mental health conditions as well as risk factors for those conditions and impaired driving history and risks. CARS Connect provides tailored reports about clients' mental health symptoms, impaired driving risk, risk factors, and other relevant experiences, and includes a list of resources tailored to clients' geographical location. CARS Connect can be directly administered to clients or self-administered via a link.

CARS Connect has three main components:

1. The *screener*, which screens for mental health disorders and psychosocial risk factors.
2. The *report generator*, which provides personalized information about mental health disorders for which a client screens positive, condensed into a reader-friendly format.
3. The *referral generator*, which compiles resources dependent on the client's screener responses and location.

Note: Users can enter additional referral information to this feature.

Why CARS Connect is the Right Choice

- CARS Connect is easy to use. Both clinicians and non-clinicians can use CARS Connect to administer screening with minimal time and effort.
- CARS Connect provides immediate personalized output to facilitate effective treatment planning for individual clients.
- CARS Connect improves intake and data collection processes for program staff, making it easier and more efficient to collect, maintain, and share information about clients.
- CARS Connect improves screening accuracy. CARS questions are originally adapted from the [World Mental Health Composite International Diagnostic Interview \(WMH-CIDI\)](#), one of the most comprehensive and thorough instruments available for diagnosing psychiatric disorders.
- CARS has been [validated](#) against a full diagnostic assessment in both a repeat DUI offender sample and a general population sample.
- CARS Connect adapts the streamlined version of CARS (CARS-SC) and offers a simplified screener and impaired driving module, an enhanced report, simplified user interface and set-up, and can be accessed online without a download.



CARS Connect compared to CARS-5 and CARS-SC

CARS Connect vs. CARS-SC & CARS-5		
CARS Connect	CARS-SC	CARS-5
Comprehensive mental health screener that can be completed in less than an hour	Comprehensive mental health screener that can be completed in less than an hour	Full diagnostic modules and a comprehensive mental health assessment – can take 1-3 hours to complete
Optional DUI-specific output	Optional DUI-specific output	DUI-specific output
Target population: 1) Impaired drivers being served in impaired driving programs or DUI courts; 2) Anyone who would benefit from a mental health screen	Target population: 1) Impaired drivers being served in impaired driving programs or DUI courts; 2) Anyone who would benefit from a mental health screen	Target population: Individuals who have engaged in DUI behavior
Hosted remotely via a web-based application	Stand-alone program installed on individual computers or local networks	Stand-alone program installed on individual computers or local networks
Single version that can be administered within an organization by and interviewer, or self-administered via a link	Separate interviewer-administered and self-administered versions	Separate interviewer-administered and self-administered versions, as well as a Spanish version
Data password-protected and unique to interviewers within organizations*	Data password-protected and unique to interviewers within organizations	Data password-protected and unique to interviewers within organizations

- While CARS-5 is specifically designed for DUI populations, CARS Connect and CARS-SC are designed more generally as mental health screening tools with the option to ask additional DUI-focused questions when applicable
- Many of the questions from CARS-5 remain the same for CARS Connect; however, CARS Connect contains only a modified screener module, not the additional modules included in CARS-5.
- Unlike other versions of CARS, CARS Connect is a cloud-based screening tool that does not need to be downloaded and installed. CARS Connect and CARS-SC share identical content; they differ in how they are hosted (i.e., cloud vs. local).



CARS Connect Screener Options

CARS Connect assessments are administered and stored via an account you create at carsconnect.org. Assessments can be administered by a staff member or self-administered by the client. To create a self-administered session, simply click 'create case' and select 'self-administered' on the next screen. Once you click 'save and continue', the program will generate a new link at the top of the screen that can then be opened as a new tab or emailed to your client to be completed remotely.

The staff-administered and self-administered versions of CARS Connect contain identical content, including a comprehensive mental health screener that evaluates for mental health disorders and related concerns, and an impaired driving module that is activated if the assessment is marked as being completed for an impaired driving program.

The staff-administered version is administered by a staff member with a user account on carsconnect.org to a client, and takes between 20 and 50 minutes to complete, depending on client responses. An Interviewer Observation module follows the screener module (see [Ending a Session](#)).

The self-administered version takes between 20 and 50 minutes for clients to complete on their own via a link that is sent to them. The self-administered screener does not include an Interviewer Observations module.

IMPORTANT: When using a link for a self-administered session, it is important to log out of carsconnect.org if the client will be completing the session on the same browser used to generate the link. CARS Connect does NOT automatically sign you out when following a self-administered link if used on the same browser used to generate the link. If you do not sign out, a client will have access to other clients' data. Similarly, make sure that your browser does not save your username or password for carsconnect.org if using the same machine for self-administered assessments.



2. Getting Started

Creating an Account

Because CARS Connect is based in the cloud, it does not need to be downloaded like previous versions of CARS. Instead an administrator must register your site by completing a form [here](https://carstrainingcenter.org/cars-connect) (at carstrainingcenter.org/cars-connect). The first account used to register your site will be the *administrator* account and can then be used to register additional subsidiary users. Later on, other accounts can also be promoted to administrators.

From carstrainingcenter.org/cars-connect:

1. Select “**create an account**” and complete the ensuing Google form

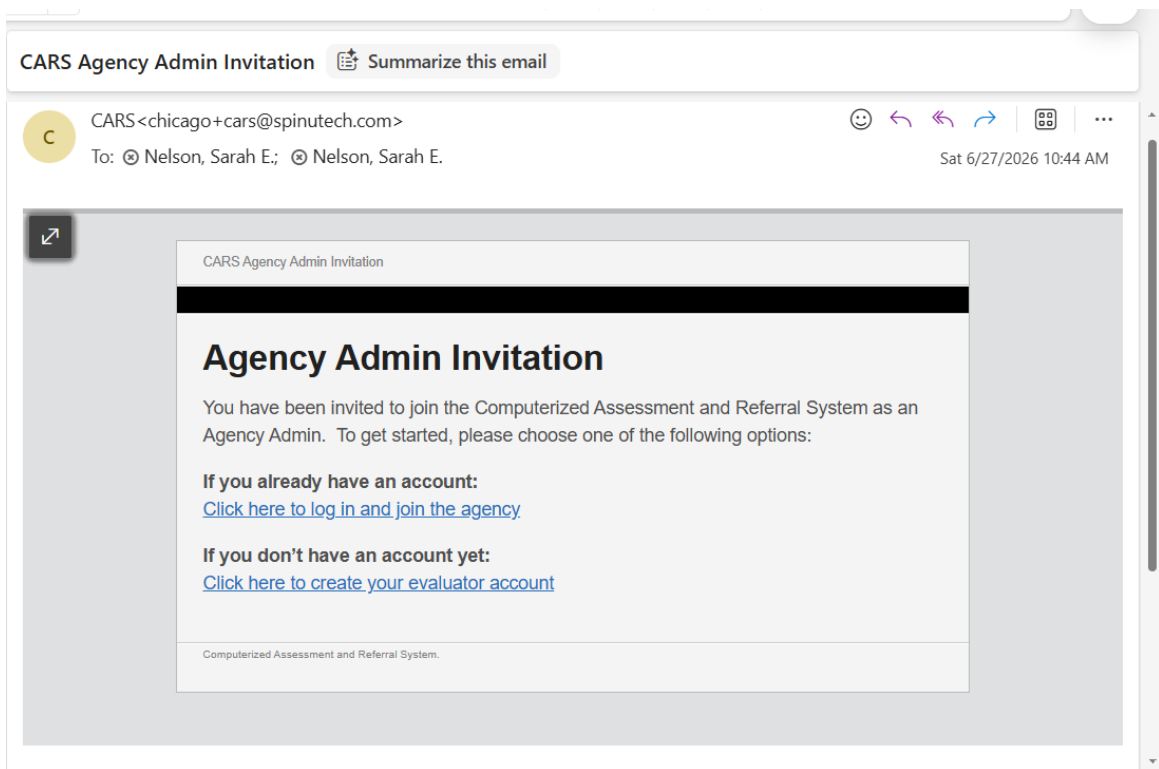
CARS Connect

Welcome to CARS Connect, our cloud-based version of CARS! To get started, please provide your information so we can create a CARS Connect account for you. Check back soon for more resources related to CARS Connect

[Create an Account](#)

Once an account has been created for your organization, you will receive an email with next steps.

2. You will receive an email within a week with your login information. Accounts are created for *organizations*, not individuals. Whoever completes the form will serve as the administrator for your organization. Each organization needs an administrator in charge of setting up additional user accounts. From the email you receive, select the link for “**If you don’t have an account yet**” and complete the requested information.



3. When you log in after registering your site, you will be logged into CARS Connect as an administrative user and have access to the full functionality of CARS Connect.

The login form is a white rectangular box with a red border. At the top is the CARS CONNECT logo. Below the logo are two input fields: 'Username' and 'Password'. A red 'Sign In' button is positioned below the password field. Below the button is a red link for 'Forgot Password?'. At the bottom, there are two links: 'New to CARS Connect - Join Here' and 'Want more Info - Learn More'.



Creating additional user accounts

1. Click the “**Agency Admin**” button after logging in

Case List

Sorted by Date Case Created. Click any column header to sort the data by ascending order and again to sort by descending order.

Create new case Export

2. On the following page, you can access all administrative functions. This includes viewing currently enrolled users and inviting new ones. To invite a new user to your organization, select “**Invite a user to agency**”

Division on Addiction - Agency Admin

[+ Invite user to join agency](#)

Evaluator	Email	Last login	Case count
Sarah Nelson ✕	snnelson@challiance.org	N/A	0
john.slabczynski ✕	jslabczynski@challiance.org	7/7/2026	2

3. This will open the below menu where you can enter the user’s email address and invite them to your agency

Division on Addiction - Agency Admin

[+ Invite user to join agency](#)

Email address

Send invitation link



- An email will be sent to the provided address shortly after that should look like the below image. New users should select the option for “**If you don’t have an account yet**”

CARS Agency Officer Invitation

Agency officer Invitation

You have been invited to join the Computerized Assessment and Referral System as an Agency officer. To get started, please choose one of the following options:

If you already have an account:
[Click here to log in and join the agency](#)

If you don’t have an account yet:
[Click here to create your evaluator account](#)

Computerized Assessment and Referral System.

- Once your user has entered all necessary information on the following page, have the user select ‘**submit**’. This will automatically log them in and bring them to the main CARS Connect page where they can conduct assessments and review previous cases.

Creating additional administrator accounts

- If you wish to elevate your created user account to a fellow admin account simply select ‘**agency admin**’ to access the administrator functions. Then click on the account you wish to promote as highlighted below

[+ Invite user to join agency](#)

Evaluator	Email	Last login	Case count
Sarah Nelson ✕	snnelson@challiance.org	N/A	0
john.slabczynski ✕	jslabczynski@challiance.org	7/7/2026	2
John.Slabczynski ✕	jmslabczynski66@gmail.com	N/A	0



- This will open the below pop-up window where you can then select the highlighted drop down box to change the user's role. To promote a user to administrator, select '**Agency admin**' from the highlighted drop down box.

Assign Role To Evaluator

Evaluator Name John Slabczynski

Role

Agency officer ▼

OKCANCEL

The CARS Connect Case List

The CARS Connect Case List appears after opening CARS Connect. New CARS Connect sessions are launched from the Case List.



[Case List](#)[Agency Admin](#)[Referral Directory](#)[Resources](#)[John Slabczynski - Logout](#)

Case List

Sorted by Date Case Created. Click any column header to sort the data by ascending order and again to sort by descending order.

Create new caseExport

Show cases for john slabczynski ▼

Search

Client ID	Case Created	Status	DUI Program	Options
Paul	07/01/2026	Pending Self-Assessment	No	Continue / Review / Report



There are five tabs in the control center toolbar:

- **Case list:** This tab contains all of your previous and ongoing sessions.
- **Agency Admin:** This tab contains the administrator functions (see [Administrator Functions](#)). This tab is only available for accounts with organization admin privileges.
- **Referral Directory:** This tab contains information on the available referrals clients may be offered after a session. You may also add additional referrals from this tab.
- **Resources:** Selecting this option redirects the user to the original CARS website where they can learn more about the development of the tool and access CARS-SC.
- **Logout:** Selecting this option logs the user out of the active account.



3. Administrator Functions

The administrator is a special CARS Connect account for administrative functions. These functions include:

- Adding, removing, or modifying user accounts (See [creating additional users](#))
- Reviewing existing case files from all users within your organization
- Reviewing information about each individual user (i.e., last login and total number of cases)

The first account used to register your organization will automatically be assigned administrator privileges. To add a second administrator or to transfer administrator privileges see [creating additional administrator accounts](#)

Important: Unlike in previous versions of CARS, administrator accounts can now conduct assessments. If you are the sole user within your organization, you do not need to add additional users to conduct assessments.

Adding and Modifying Referrals

CARS Connect matches clients' zip codes to referral data and gives available treatment referrals within a 30-mile range. A handful of resources for each state are pre-loaded into the referral database. To generate additional referrals in CARS Connect reports, the administrator must add referral resources to the database (i.e., behavioral health and substance use treatment programs and resources). To add a referral location:

1. From the CARS Connect main page, select **Referral Directory**.
2. On this page, you can view all organizations listed in the tool as well as add your own referrals by selecting **Add an organization to the referral database** at the bottom of the page.
3. Enter the information in the relevant fields, then select **Save and Continue**.



After adding referrals, the administrator can also look up and flag referrals. *Flagging* a referral alerts the CARS team to any potential issues with the listed organization and initiates a review. Though organizations can add referral organizations to the database, they can no longer modify or remove referrals themselves. To look up and flag a referral:

1. From the CARS Connect home page, select **Referral Directory**
2. You can look up a referral by facility name, zip code, or using the interactive map.
3. To flag a referral, click on the referral site you wish to flag and select **Details**.
4. On the following screen, next to the referral name, select the **Flag for Review** button

Referral Details

[← Back to list](#)

Monmouth Medical Center 24 Hour Hotline

[Flag for Review](#)



4. Conducting Assessments

After CARS Connect users complete the site registration and login for the first time, CARS Connect users are ready to administer assessments.

Note: Users are encouraged to practice administering CARS Connect either by themselves or with a peer to build familiarity with the tool and ensure self-administered sessions cannot access other clients' information. To differentiate between practice sessions and client sessions, enter a test ID (e.g., Test-1, Test-2, Test-3) in the Client ID text field.

Starting a Session

To begin a new session:

1. In the CARS Connect case list, select **Create new case**.
2. Enter the Client ID and complete the other fields
Note: Client ID is the unique identifier used to match reports to your clients. Because CARS Connect is no longer saved locally to your computer, we recommend using an anonymous Client ID that can be matched to your client using a separate file. For example, if a client is named John Smith, you may enter them as Client ID 1 and in a separate file, link Client ID 1 to your client John Smith.
3. Select **Save and Continue**.
4. If the session is interviewer-administered, you will automatically move onto the next page where the assessment will begin. If the interview is self-administered, the page will reload with a new link at the top. This link can be either accessed on the same machine or emailed to a client to be completed remotely.

Important: CARS Connect does not automatically logout the user when completing a self-administered session on the same machine used to generate the link. To ensure clients cannot access the information of other clients, select **copy link** and **logout** before pasting the link in a new tab. Before leaving your client, ensure that the tool has logged out and only the **login** option is available at the top of the screen.



A session begins when the CARS Connect assessment window appears on screen. When completing a user-administered session, all tabs will be available at the top of your screen. These **SHOULD NOT** appear when a client is completing a self-administered session. If they do appear, stop the assessment, logout, and ensure that they do not appear when restarting the assessment.

CARS Connect

SC1a.
Welcome to CARS! CARS is an assessment that asks you about your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. CARS will ask you a series of questions about yourself and your health history, including your mental health history. It will use your answers to develop a report personalized just for you. You and the program you are completing this for can use this report to help make future treatment decisions. Please answer honestly. Your answers to this interview will be shared with program staff. Speak to program staff about whether anyone else will see your answers. Data from this interview may be shared with the developers of this assessment, but no identifying information, like your name, will be attached to that data.

Please read each question and answer to the best of your ability. To answer each question, you might have to check a box, click a bubble, or type your own answer. You cannot go back and change answers to questions on previous screens during the assessment, so think carefully about each question. The assessment will take anywhere between 20 and 50 minutes. Are you willing to proceed?

☐ Willing to proceed with interview
☐ Refused to proceed with interview

Evaluator Notes...

Save and continue

Question Display

The question display is the main feature of the CARS Connect assessment window. There are several types of question displays throughout the interview, some with only one question and some with multiple questions presented sequentially.

All questions are labeled with a letter-number combination (e.g., SC25c), followed by question text. When administering CARS Connect to a client, read the question text out loud and mark responses accordingly. Advance to the next question by selecting **Save and Continue**.

Important: While you can view previous answers on the same page, CARS Connect does not allow you to go back and review or change answers from previous pages due to the complexity in its skip logic.



Some questions include text in parentheses. This text can be repeated if necessary, but is not required to be read.

Some questions also include blue text below the question prompt. These are interviewer instructions. Some interviewer instructions provide extra information to help proceed with the interview, and should not be read to the client. Other interviewer instructions give extra prompts to ask a client if they are having difficulty answering a question. Read these prompts aloud to clients if necessary.

There are three answer types in the CARS-SC assessment:

- Radio buttons: Round buttons that limit the user to one answer option for a question.
- Checkboxes: Square buttons that allow the user to select multiple answer options for a question. Select all options the client endorses.
- Text boxes: Rectangles that require entering text or numbers as a response. Click inside the box and enter text or a numeric value.

Some questions will immediately ask a follow up question depending on your response. For example, in the below image SC15a_1 is presented because SC15a is endorsed. Treat each individual question separately. Once no questions remain on the screen, select **Save and Continue** to move to the next part of the assessment.

CARS Connect

SC15a. Was there ever a time in your life when you felt very afraid or really, really shy with people, like meeting new people, going to parties, going on a date, or using a public bathroom?

☒ Yes
☐ No

Evaluator Notes...

SC15a_1. Did you experience this during the past 12 months?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Evaluator Notes...



Ending a Session

Sessions can be ended and resumed at any point in the assessment. If you lose internet connection or need to temporarily end the assessment for any reason, CARS Connect saves at whatever page you are on and can easily be resumed from the **Case List**. Simply find the row that says **Pending Interview** and select **Continue**.

Paul	07/01/2026	Pending Self-Assessment	No	Continue Review / Report
Test	06/29/2026	Completed	Yes	Review / Report

Self-administered sessions can be resumed by the client by following the same link used previously.

Ending a Self-Administered Session: After completing the interview, the client will be shown the following screen:

CARS Connect

SC59. You have completed the interview. Thank you for taking the time and care to work through these questions.

THE CLIENT PORTION OF THE ASSESSMENT IS NOW COMPLETE. IF THIS ASSESSMENT IS BEING SELF-ADMINISTERED, CLICK CONTINUE. IF THIS ASSESSMENT IS BEING ADMINISTERED BY AN INTERVIEWER, CLICK "CONTINUE" ONCE YOU ARE READY TO COMPLETE THE INTERVIEWER QUESTIONS THAT FOLLOW.

☒ Continue

Complete

Once they select **Continue**, and **Complete**, a thank you message will display and the corresponding row will update in your case list as complete. From the case list you will be able to review the clients raw data report and report which can then be shared with the client.



Ending an Interviewer-Administered Session: After completing the interview, select **Continue**, dismiss the client, then select **Next** to proceed to the Interviewer Observation (IO) module. This brief module asks the user about the interview experience, including client conduct and functioning. Responses and notes from this module can be generated in a Raw Data report.

Note: This information will not be shared with the client in their report.

After completing the Interviewer Observation module, you will be presented with the raw data report. To generate a report, return to the **Case List**, find the row for the client of interest and select **report** to generate the report.



5. Reports

CARS Connect generates user-friendly individualized reports in PDF format based on client responses to the assessment. Reports are designed to be shared with clients. When sharing a report with a client, review the entire document with them, ensure they understand all parts, and leave time for questions.

Important: CARS Connect does not provide a final diagnostic determination. It is a screening tool. Further evaluation is necessary to determine whether problems reported are sufficient to qualify as a disorder and to determine the level of problem severity.

The reports consist of a Screening Case Summary, a Screening Report, and a Referrals Section.

The Screening Case Summary provides a brief synopsis of all information in the report. The mental health screening table outlines the disorders for which the client met screening criteria for symptoms in both their lifetime and within the past year.

The Screening Report contains descriptions of each disorder for which a client screened positive. Each report is composed of an explanation of the disorder and a description of the client's reported symptoms.

Reports may also include a list of referrals for health services tailored for clients. Referrals are sorted by zip code and contingent upon the amount of information provided about local services. Some referrals have been provided for all 50 states, but these should be updated with specific local services as well. To include local referrals in reports, each site must add referral locations (see [Adding and Modifying Referrals](#)).



6. Troubleshooting

Password Recovery

To recover the password for either an administrator or user account:

1. Select **Forgot Password** in the login window.
2. Input the corresponding email address into the open response box.
3. An email containing a link will be sent to the address provided during registration. The email may take up to five minutes to send. Select the link and you will be brought to a new window where you can update your password.

Reporting a Bug

Bugs are issues that cause CARS Connect to operate incorrectly or produce incorrect output. If you believe you've found a bug within the program, please email support@carstrainingcenter.org.

Other Issues

As a cloud-based tool, some issues can be rectified by clearing your browser history including cookies. To clear your browser history:

1. Open the settings screen for your browser. On Google Chrome, this can be accessed by clicking the three dots in a vertical line on the top right corner of your browser window and then selecting **settings**.
2. On the left hand column, select **Privacy and Security** and then **Delete Browsing Data**.
3. Make sure time range is **All time** and all three check boxes beneath are selected.

The image shows a 'Delete browsing data' dialog box with two tabs: 'Basic' and 'Advanced'. The 'Basic' tab is active. Under 'Time range', a dropdown menu is set to 'All time'. Below this, three items are listed with checkboxes: 'Browsing history' (checked), 'Cookies and other site data' (checked), and 'Cached images and files' (checked). Each item has a brief description of what will be deleted. At the bottom, there is a note about Google Account activity and two buttons: 'Cancel' and 'Delete data'.

4. Select **Delete Data**.

If you encounter an issue while using CARS Connect that is not a bug, and cannot find a solution in the CARS Connect User Manual, please email support@carstrainingcenter.org.

When you email support@carstrainingcenter.org, it is helpful if you can send a description of your issue with as much of the following information as possible:

- Your computer operating system
- A screenshot, if applicable
- A list of any other applications running on your computer at the time
- A description of any recent changes to your computer, if applicable

For feedback, suggestions, or other inquiries, contact info@carstrainingcenter.org.