



Computerized Assessment & Referral System

What is CARS?

CARS (i.e., the Computerized Assessment and Referral System) is a **computerized clinical report generator tool for use with a structured diagnostic mental health assessment**, effectively bringing comprehensive mental health assessment “from bench to bedside.”

Why do people need CARS?

Comprehensive clinical assessment tools can provide volumes of high quality diagnostic information that can facilitate effective treatment planning, but commonly are not user-friendly. Because such tools frequently require more time and expertise than many would-be users might have available, their use is limited. **CARS packages a powerful mental health assessment tool with a user-friendly interface, increased flexibility, and immediate personalized output, to create a tool that can be used easily by laypeople to administer comprehensive mental health assessments.**

Who Needs CARS?

Research has shown that people with one mental health problem (e.g., substance use disorder) also are at high risk for other mental health problems. For example, in DUI populations, additional mental health problems are prevalent and linked to recidivism. CARS provides a cost-effective tool that **treatment programs in general and substance use programs in particular** can use to screen their populations for mental health disorders.

What is the advantage of CARS?

Treatment programs and other settings that address mental health often employ staff who do not have expertise in mental health issues. **CARS provides a computerized tool that allows these staff to effectively screen for mental health issues.** The reports CARS generates assist staff by providing personalized information about disorders and possible referral sources for their clients. Because CARS uses the internationally-recognized CIDI (i.e., Comprehensive International Diagnostic Interview), suitable for use by lay interviewers, **programs can be confident that the assessments that they conduct are well-validated and reliable.**

Who will want CARS?

Treatment programs around the world concerned with addressing mental health issues will be interested in CARS. **Substance use programs and DUI treatment programs, as well as court settings and primary care settings have reason to screen for mental health issues in their clientele and thus will be interested in CARS.**

What are the long-term prospects for CARS?

Research continues to find strong links between substance use, DUI, criminal behavior, homelessness, and underlying mental health issues. As this research increases, so will the desire of programs that address these behavioral problems to assess and address the underlying mental health issues that influence them. **CARS can be adapted for use in many kinds of community programs, as well as educational and primary care settings.**

The Century Council, a national not for profit organization funded by America’s leading distillers and dedicated to fighting drunk driving and underage drinking, is providing financial support for the CARS project to develop computer software to guide assessment, diagnosis and referral for DUI offender programs that addresses psychiatric comorbidity.