



Autism and Tertiary Behavior Supports
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Childhood Autism Rating Scale – 2nd Edition (CARS-2)

Topic Summary:

The CARS-2 has become one of the most widely used and empirically validated autism assessments/screening tools. It has proven especially effective in discriminating between children with autism and those with severe cognitive deficits, and in distinguishing mild-to-moderate from severe autism. It is more responsive to individuals on the "high-functioning" end of the autism spectrum--those with average or higher IQ scores, better verbal skills, and more subtle social and behavioral deficits. The CARS-2 includes three forms:

1. Standard Version: Children younger than 6 with communication difficulties or below-average estimated IQ's
2. High-Functioning Version: Children 6 years and older who verbally fluent and have IQ scores above 80
3. Questionnaire for Parents/Caregivers: An unscored scale that gathers additional information

The new CARS-2 is extremely useful in identifying symptoms of autism. Schools can use this tool on a student who has characteristics of an autism spectrum disorder. The screening information can assist in educational identification, program planning, and a referral to a medical diagnostic team.

Implementation Checklist:

1. If a teacher/parent has concerns their student/child has characteristics of an autism spectrum disorder, refer to an autism consultant/team or someone in the district with autism knowledge.
2. Take time to complete an observation of the student using either the Standard or High Functioning forms in both structured and unstructured settings. Allow ½ to a full day.
3. Send home the Parent/Caregiver Questionnaire for the family to complete.
4. Score the form based on observations/interview with the student.
5. Compile both the observation information and parent information into a report.
6. Meet as a school team including the family to discuss the findings. As a team, make educational plans and provide the family with resources and referrals to a medical diagnostic team.

Recommended Resources:

1. Schopler, E., Van Bourgondien, M., Wellman, G., Love, S. (2010). Childhood Autism Rating Scale – Second Edition. Los Angeles, CA: Western Psychological Services.

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