

Frequently Asked Questions Commonwealth Authentication Service (CAS)

What is the Commonwealth Authentication Services (CAS)?

The Commonwealth Authentication Services (CAS) is a customer service system designed to make the use of online state services easier and more secure.

Currently, Virginians need to establish a separate user account with each agency before they can use online services. As a result, Virginians cannot use the Internet to obtain or apply for state services that require proof of identity. CAS will increase efficiency and security by allowing Virginians to use a single login to access online services while also verifying their identity over the Internet.

How do Virginians use CAS?

Currently, CAS is only used by the Department of Social Services CommonHelp website. If individuals choose to apply for benefits online, CAS will walk them through the creation of an account and prompt them for identifying information. If the applicant chooses to voluntarily submit identifying information, CAS will verify that information with DMV records. Once the information you provide is verified the applicant will be able to apply for benefits on-line. In the future, Virginians will have easier access to more online state services thanks to this system.

What if I choose not to do business online with the state?

Use of CAS is entirely voluntary: at any time, an individual can choose to apply for benefits in person instead of online. Virginians will continue to have access to state services if they choose to conduct business through other methods (walk-in, mail, telephone). Online access and the use of CAS is optional and fully at the citizen's choice.

What personal information about me is included in the CAS system?

Basic information such as your name, address, date of birth, and DMV customer number, as you have provided it to DMV. Information such as height, weight, race, and eye color are not used. No new data is gathered for CAS. Agencies cannot use CAS to look at another agency's data.

Is the state developing a "master database" that will contain all the information the state has on me?

No. Virginia is not building a single master identity database that contains all information about your interactions with state government. Only basic information, such as name and address, is included in CAS. When you log on to do business with a state agency, CAS will check to make sure the information you enter matches what is already in the system. CAS will then provide only a yes/no answer back to the agency to verify identity.

Each individual participating agency will continue to securely maintain its own data, and agencies cannot see the data at other agencies.

So, if the state is NOT building a “master identity database,” what is it building?

In order for state agencies to have the ability to verify a person’s identity online, a system has been developed using a limited data set populated with pre-existing information such as name and address. Using CAS is the online equivalent of showing your driver’s license to write a check for groceries, or cash a winning lottery ticket. However, CAS actually holds less information than is displayed on your driver’s license.

Why is the state doing this?

CAS will help reduce fraud, abuse, and waste in government, which will result in lower costs of services. It will also provide a more secure and convenient process for citizens to access services online. CAS greatly reduces the risk of providing services and benefits to citizens who misrepresent themselves.

What does DMV have to do with this? I thought DMV was just about issuing driver’s licenses?

Driver’s licenses are the most widely used identification document in America today. To receive services from many government and commercial organizations, individuals usually present their driver’s licenses to prove their identity. DMV is supporting this state initiative by using its expertise with verifying identity. Before DMV issues a driver’s license, the applicant must prove who he says he is, that he lives where he says he lives, and that he is a citizen or legally authorized to be in the U.S.

Why haven’t there been any public hearings on CAS?

By law, other state agencies have had access to DMV information for many years when it is needed to support their operations and successfully serve Virginians. The CAS project was approved by the legislature in the Appropriations Act, and it has been reviewed by the Auditor of Public Accounts and the Office of the Attorney General to ensure compliance with state and federal law.

How secure will this data be?

The information contained in CAS will be subject to the same high level of security as other state data. The computers are located in a Tier III data center with perimeter security and a security operations center that monitors network traffic 24 hours a day, every day.

Will this data be made available to businesses for commercial purposes, or provided to the general public?

No, it will not be published on a website, or made available to the general public or businesses for commercialization.

Will any information be shared with the federal government?

The CAS system does not share data with the federal government. It is a state system.