



DRUG & ALCOHOL CLEARINGHOUSE

SDLA “Direct Connect” Webinar – Questions and Answers

The following questions were submitted by SDLAs to FMCSA during the July 2023 Clearinghouse-SDLA IT Webinar.

Testing the Clearinghouse Connection

1. When can States start obtaining login credentials and setting up testing?

States may log in and set up testing now (see “Accessing the Clearinghouse” section for information on how to log in). SDLA users must first obtain an FMCSA Portal account with the proper Clearinghouse user role. FMCSA has created job aids to help with this process, they are available on the [SDLA Resources page](#).

Once you have obtained your Portal account and proper user role, contact the Clearinghouse Technical Team at clearinghouse@dot.gov to help you set up your elevated access (to grant access to the web UI interface, the full set of data, or ability to generate certificates) and determine your testing needs. When your State is ready to test, you will work with the Clearinghouse Team to schedule a testing date.

2. How soon will FMCSA be ready for States to go to production with Clearinghouse data?

Because the Clearinghouse is already in production, the data is available now and States can start integrating data from the Clearinghouse system.

Note that the status change messages within the Clearinghouse system will change starting on the November 18, 2024 compliance date—this is because the SDLA notification dates in the Clearinghouse system need to be reset on the compliance date for the official record.

3. Do States need to have an Interconnection Security Agreement (ISA) in place to begin testing its connection?

Yes. States will need an ISA to connect to the Clearinghouse in production, as well as in the lower environments.

4. When will the ISA template be available?

As of September 2023, the ISA template is available. To request the template, States should send an email to SDLAClearinghouse@dot.gov.



DRUG & ALCOHOL CLEARINGHOUSE

5. What connection testing does FMCSA expect States using the Direct Connect method to complete?

States will develop their own testing plans, and FMCSA will support States in implementing those testing plans. FMCSA will work with States on an individual basis to ensure that States can send and receive data.

5. Is the REST service testing path available in existing Clearinghouse developer documentation?

FMCSA will soon post an updated version of the Clearinghouse Web Development Handbook to include information about the REST service testing path. FMCSA will notify SDLAs when the updated handbook is available.

6. With the Direct Connect to the Clearinghouse option, can States use a VPN as part of the connection?

FMCSA does not recommend using a VPN because FMCSA has network-level restrictions on access to resources, which blocks certain VPNs. If a VPN connection is hosted internationally, that may cause connection issues because certain international IP addresses are blocked from accessing FMCSA resources.

Accessing the Clearinghouse

7. Can States request FMCSA Portal access to view Clearinghouse reports, even if States will be using the CDLIS solution to run Clearinghouse queries?

Yes. FMCSA encourages States to acquire direct access to the Clearinghouse web interface, regardless of the State's chosen connection method (direct connect or CDLIS solution).

For step-by-step instructions on how to request access to the Clearinghouse as an SDLA, download the [SDLA Portal job aid](#).

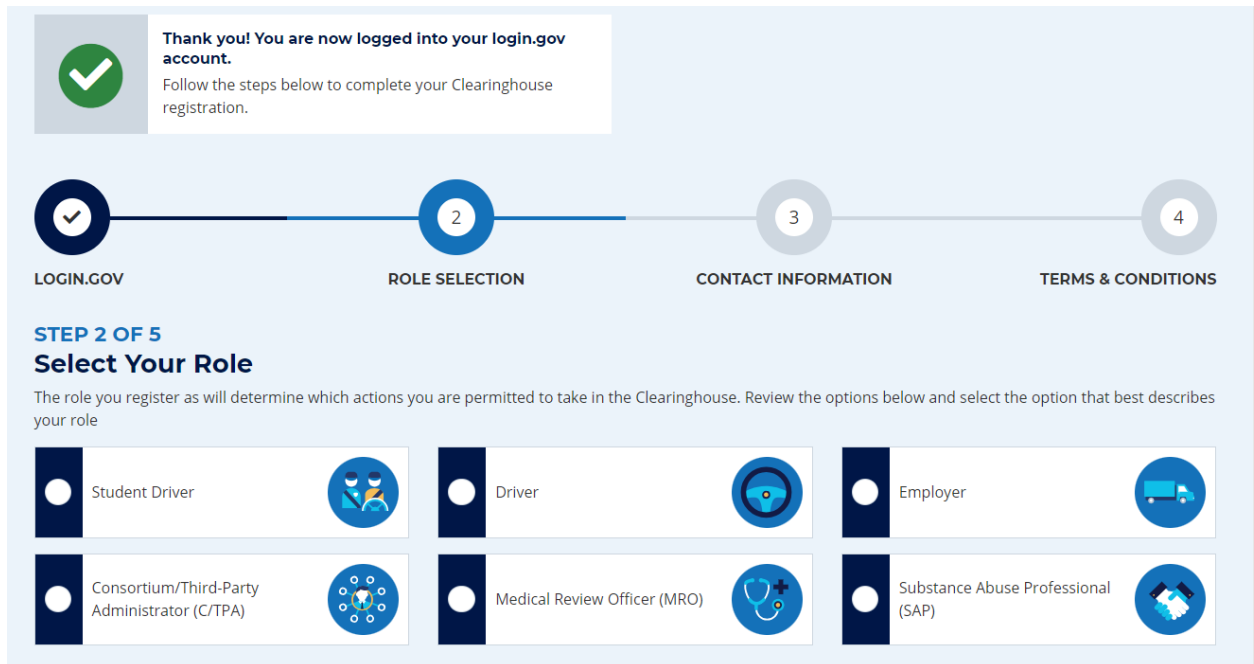
8. Who should States contact for assistance if they have difficulty creating a "DACH - General Query" user role within the FMCSA Portal?

If a State has trouble creating a Clearinghouse account or requesting the "DACH-General Query" user role, it might mean that the State is set up as a different type of organization (i.e., not as an SDLA). Contact the Clearinghouse Technical Team (clearinghouse@dot.gov) for assistance.

DRUG & ALCOHOL CLEARINGHOUSE

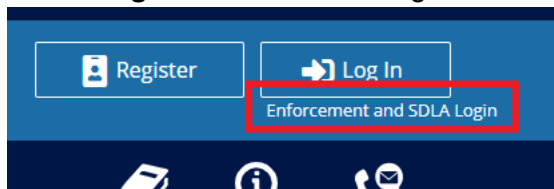
9. When setting up Clearinghouse access, I am being asked to select my user role. Which user role should I choose?

SDLA Clearinghouse users should NOT see the “Select Your Role” screen in the screenshot below:



If you see the screen above:

- You may have used the incorrect login button. Be sure to click the **Enforcement and SDLA Login** link below the “Log In” button:



- You may not have the correct FMCSA Portal account; see the previous question for whom to contact for assistance.

Queries and Notifications

10. Will FMCSA send an initial “push” notification about drivers that are in a prohibited status on the compliance date (November 18, 2024)?

No. FMCSA is not planning to send an initial push notification about drivers that are already in a prohibited status on the compliance date. All push notifications will be triggered by a



DRUG & ALCOHOL CLEARINGHOUSE

change in the driver's Clearinghouse status; these will begin on the compliance date of November 18, 2024. States must use either the web interface or the REST service to *pull* their State's prohibited drivers list from the Clearinghouse on November 18, 2024; this report will serve as the State's "initial notification."

11. How often will FMCSA push Clearinghouse data to States?

Driver status change data is pushed live; as soon as the driver status changes in the Clearinghouse system, the status change notification is sent to the State.

Notification emails will be sent individually. REST service notifications are sent into a queue and initially sent one time. If there is a problem connecting to a State's endpoint, the Clearinghouse system will keep trying to send the notification over a 24-hour period.

FMCSA developed the system this way so that States will not receive more than one push notification per second. If States have a different push notification frequency requirement, FMCSA can work to configure arrangements on a State-by-State basis.

12. Can a State build an initial database from the prohibited driver report, continue to update the State database based on push notifications, and use this database to check whether a CLP or CDL can be issued, without the State having to individually check the Clearinghouse every time a CLP or CDL is issued?

No; that approach would not meet the Clearinghouse-II requirements. States must perform a live Clearinghouse query to do that check before issuing the CLP or CDL.

13. Can States build a database table to report on the push option?

Yes, States can track their own data in this way.

14. Will FMCSA send notifications of Clearinghouse down time?

Yes. FMCSA posts alerts about scheduled system maintenance to the Clearinghouse on the Clearinghouse website. We will also post alerts about scheduled outages affecting systems the Clearinghouse relies on (including CDLIS), if the scope or duration of the outage significantly impacts Clearinghouse functionality, such as conducting queries. These scheduled maintenance windows typically take place on the weekends or in the late evening to avoid business hours.

Notifications about unscheduled Clearinghouse down time would be sent to SDLAs via email.

15. What is the response time for a REST service query for a CLP or CDL issuance?



DRUG & ALCOHOL CLEARINGHOUSE

FMCSA included details in the Clearinghouse Web Development Handbook v1.3, which is available on the [SDLA Resources page](#). The average response time is less than one second; the only time that it consistently takes more than a second is when the Clearinghouse does not have any information about the driver being queried. When a State queries a CDL that the Clearinghouse does not recognize, the Clearinghouse then sends a request over to CDLIS to obtain that driver's record and verify that their CDL is legitimate. The Clearinghouse will then pull in any alias data for that driver and combine the Clearinghouse records for the previous CDL(s) under the current CDL.

FMCSA is working on getting response times to AAMVA and will add that information to an upcoming version of the Web Development Handbook. FMCSA will notify States when the next updated version of the Handbook is available.

16. Since the prohibited driver report is already available for States to pull from the Clearinghouse, does that mean that upon connecting to the Clearinghouse, the State must downgrade the CDLs and CLPs of drivers in a prohibited status?

No, the Clearinghouse-II requirements do not go into effect until the November 18, 2024 compliance date. However, States *may* begin to downgrade prohibited drivers before November 18, 2024 if they have obtained the legislative authority to do so.

On November 18, 2024, the 60-day clock will begin for States to downgrade the CDL or CLP privileges of all drivers in a prohibited status, including those who were prohibited prior to the compliance date. FMCSA encourages States to consider downgrading prohibited drivers' CDLs in advance of the compliance date as a way to manage this requirement.

17. Can FMCSA send States an approximate volume of impacted drivers in each State?

That information is available to States to pull from the Clearinghouse. FMCSA recommends that States set up their Portal and Clearinghouse user account with Full Access now so they can pull their State's prohibited driver reports and use that to determine staffing needs. Resources to help States set up Portal access and pull Clearinghouse reports are available on the [SDLA resources page](#).

18. Does FMCSA have an estimate for the approximate number of CDLs and CLPs that States will be notified about in the year after the November 18, 2024 compliance date?

FMCSA does not currently have an estimated volume of the status change notifications that States can expect to receive and process, but can look into generating that.

Two reports are currently available for States to pull from the Clearinghouse: the driver status change report, and the prohibited drivers report. If States regularly run the driver



DRUG & ALCOHOL CLEARINGHOUSE

status change report for a period of time, the number of records States get back is the number of notifications that they would receive. There is no reason to think that the volume that States will see after the compliance date will be appreciably different from what States see right now in the system. When States obtain access to the Clearinghouse web interface, they can pull these reports right now and see the type of volume of transactions they can expect to receive going forward, as well as the expected initial “boot up” volume of prohibited drivers.

In addition, Clearinghouse monthly reports show prohibited driver data broken down by State, which may be helpful for States to refer to and see the volume of prohibited drivers that has been building over time for each State. Visit the [Clearinghouse Learning Center](#) to access these publicly available monthly reports.

Miscellaneous

19. Will the erroneous and rescind notifications be sent via the batch loads?

FMCSA will send erroneous notifications as part of the push notifications. The structure of the push notification includes an array of IDs that would mark previous notifications as erroneous.

20. How will FMCSA handle the error reports (section 3.4 “Error Reporting” in the Web Development Handbook)?

A State may opt to report errors to FMCSA when the State receives a notification from the Clearinghouse that contains invalid data. States can send those error reports to the Clearinghouse team at clearinghouse@dot.gov. Upon receipt, FMCSA will review these reports on a case-by-case basis.