

SUBJECT: 2024 Cost Report Request - STAIRS

Dear Providers: This notice contains information on mandatory 2024 cost reporting and cost report preparer requirements for the following programs:

- 24-Hour Residential Child Care (24RCC)
- Home and Community-based Services (HCS)
- Texas Home Living (TxHmL)
- Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with an Intellectual Disability or Related Conditions (ICF/IID)
- Residential Care and STAR+PLUS HCBS Assisted Living Facilities (RC)
- STAR+PLUS Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS)
- Nursing Facilities (NF)

NOTE: Providers of Day Activity and Health Services (DAHS); Deaf-Blind with Multiple Disabilities (DBMD); Community Living and Support Services (CLASS)-Direct Service Agency (DSA); CLASS-Case Management Agency (CMA); Primary Home Care, Family Care, Community Attendant Services (PHC/FC/CAS); and STAR+PLUS Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) HCBS and Non-HCBS (Providers with a Fee For Service contract in rate enhancement) will receive a separate email regarding their reporting requirements for the 2024 reporting period.

DUE DATE FOR COST REPORT SUBMISSION

The 2024 cost report must be fully verified, all required documentation uploaded, and the cost report submitted through the STAIRS online application. Information on STAIRS is provided below. The 2024 cost report must be submitted by **April 30, 2025**.

REPORT SUBMISSION AND PREPARER REQUIREMENTS

Each provider of the above services must submit financial and statistical information through a cost report **for each contract held with the State of Texas and/or STAR+PLUS contract held with a Managed Care Organization.**

Each contracted provider is responsible for submitting an accurate cost report completed in accordance with all applicable instructions and rules.

In accordance with Title 1 of the Texas Administrative Code (1 TAC) Section 355.102(d), each provider is responsible for ensuring that the preparer who signs their Cost Report Methodology Certification completes the required HHSC-sponsored cost report training. Preparers must complete a training webinar for each program for which a cost report is submitted. **In order to be qualified to complete the 2024 cost report, the preparer must have completed the mandatory 2024 (held in 2025) cost report training.**

Preparers who have NOT completed the mandatory training will NOT be added to the list of eligible preparers in STAIRS and, therefore, cannot be selected and assigned as the Preparer. NO EXEMPTIONS from the mandatory training requirements will be granted.

[Information Letter No. 2024-15](#) was distributed via HHSC electronic communication on December 5, 2024, to notify providers of the upcoming schedule of available training sessions. This letter has also been posted on the [HHSC PFD website](#) in the Training Information section of each program. Details on requirements for mandatory cost report training for preparers and how to register for a training webinar are available on the [PFD website](#).

STAIRS

Providers must submit their 2024 cost report through STAIRS. STAIRS is web-based and hosted by state contractor Fairbanks, LLC.

Providers and preparers who have previously submitted a cost report via STAIRS will use the same login information to access the 2023 Cost Report.

New providers without prior STAIRS access will receive an email containing STAIRS login information, including their username and password. The email will be sent to the Primary Entity Contact designated by HHSC PFD. A new provider who has not received an email with their login information by Feb. 7, 2024, should contact CostInformationPFD@hhs.texas.gov.

The Primary Entity Contact is responsible for assigning other Contacts for their entity in STAIRS. **At a minimum, a "Preparer" who is responsible for completing the entity's cost report(s) must be assigned.** Assigning a "Primary

Financial Contact” is also an option. If a Primary Financial Contact is assigned, either the Primary Entity Contact or the Primary Financial Contact can assign additional Contacts, including the assignment of the Preparer.

It is strongly encouraged that the Preparer be assigned as soon as possible to give the preparer access to the cost report in STAIRS. They must have adequate time to prepare the cost report so that the entity may then complete the final step in STAIRS to submit their cost report by the due date.

A reference material document titled **Helpful Information for Contacts and Preparers** is available to provide guidance in adding other Contacts or Preparers. Reference Materials are located at the bottom of the main screen after logging into STAIRS.

When logging into STAIRS for the first time, a Contact will be asked to establish a security profile for their account which will include setting up three (3) question and answer pairs that will be used to validate identity in the event the Contact forgets or needs to reset their password.

PFD WEBSITE

The HHSC PFD website contains program-specific cost report instructions, cost report training information and materials, payment rates, PFD staff contact information, and web links for cost report training registration and support for automated reporting. Additional information and features are added periodically.

We encourage you to visit the PFD website: <https://pfd.hhs.texas.gov/long-term-services-supports>

FAILURE TO SUBMIT AN ACCEPTABLE COST REPORT

For providers contracted with HHSC or a MCO, failure to submit a required cost report by the deadline constitutes an administrative contract violation under 1 TAC section 355.111. Failure to submit an acceptable cost report may lead to a vendor hold placement.

NOTIFICATION OF ADJUSTMENT, RECONCILIATION AND SETTLEMENT REPORT

It is the contracted provider’s responsibility to review any adjustments made to the cost report because of HHSC’s financial examination. Once HHSC completes the

financial examination of the cost report, HHSC will notify the entity contact and financial contacts specified in STAIRS via email regarding any adjustments to the report. The entity contact or financial contact have thirty days from HHSC's notification of adjustments to review and agree or disagree to the report. If a provider disagrees, the provider may submit an informal review through STAIRS within the provider's thirty-day review period.

EXCUSAL OF REPORTS WITH NO UNITS OF SERVICE

For LTSS providers, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) will be excusing reports verified as having performed no billable services during the provider's reporting period. A banner message will be displayed at the top of the State of Texas Automated Cost Reporting System (STAIRS) screen if a report has been excused. For more information on cost report excusal and criteria by program, please visit the [Provider Finance Department \(PFD\) website](#). If the provider has questions, please contact the HHSC PFD LTSS team at PFD-LTSS@hhs.texas.gov.

RESOURCES

Questions regarding contracts and cost report groupings that have been assigned to your entity should be directed to HHSC PFD at costinformationPFD@hhs.texas.gov

Questions regarding Preparers, or the list of Preparers, should be directed to HHSC PFD at costinformationPFD@hhs.texas.gov

Questions regarding adding Contacts or problems with Username and Password should be directed to the Fairbanks, LLC, Help Desk at 877-354-3831 or info@fairbanksllc.com

Questions regarding properly completing your cost report in STAIRS should be directed to the appropriate HHSC contact for your program. A list of program contacts can be found at: <https://pfd.hhs.texas.gov/long-term-services-supports/contact-list>

Sincerely,

HHSC Provider Finance Department