

## **SUBJECT: 2024 Attendant Compensation Rate Enhancement Accountability Report Request - STAIRS**

Dear Providers: This notice contains information on mandatory Rate Enhancement Accountability Reporting for the following programs:

- Deaf-Blind Multiple Disabilities Waiver (DBMD)
- Day Activity and Health Services (DAHS)
- CPC: Community Living and Support Services (CLASS)- Direct Service Agency (DSA); Community Living and Support Services (CLASS)- Case Management Agency (CMA); Primary Home Care (PHC), Family Care (FC), Community Attendant Services (CAS)
- STAR+PLUS Long-term Services and Supports (LTSS), Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS), and Non-HCBS (Providers with a Fee-For-Service contract in the Attendant Compensation Rate Enhancement Program.)

In accordance with Title 1 of the Texas Administrative Code (1 TAC) Section 355.102(d), the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) has established reporting schedules per program. HHSC has determined providers for the programs listed above will be required to submit an "even-year" cost report.

In accordance with 1 TAC Section 355.112(h)(2)(B) concerning the Attendant Compensation Rate Enhancement reports, HHSC requires participating providers to submit an attendant compensation report for determining spending requirements in the Attendant Compensation Rate Enhancement Program. For rate years in which participating providers are not required to submit a cost report, HHSC requires a subset of participating providers to submit an accountability report to serve as an attendant compensation report.

Please refer to the information letter located on the HHSC website (see address below for more information):

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/il2023-42.pdf>

HHSC may collect 2024 accountability reports from the providers listed above for their 2024 fiscal years for the time period in which they participated in the Attendant Compensation Rate Enhancement Program. Providers for the program types listed above who did not participate in rate enhancement during their 2024 fiscal year are not required to submit an accountability report.

## **DUE DATE FOR COST REPORT SUBMISSION**

The accountability report(s) must be fully verified, all required documentation uploaded, and the report submitted through the STAIRS online application. Information on STAIRS is provided below. The 2024 accountability report(s) for the above services must be submitted no later than **April 30, 2025**.

## **REPORT SUBMISSION AND PREPARER REQUIREMENTS**

For providers of the above services enrolled in the Staffing and Compensation Report, it is the contracted provider's responsibility to submit an accurate report completed in accordance with all applicable instructions and rules.

In accordance with 1 TAC Section 355.102(d), each provider is responsible for ensuring that the preparer who signs the Cost Report Methodology Certification completes the required HHSC-sponsored cost report training. Preparers must complete a training webinar for each program for which an accountability report is submitted.

***In order to be qualified to complete the 2024 accountability, the preparer must have completed the mandatory cost report training for the years 2023 (held in 2024) or 2024 (held in 2025).***

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 Dec. 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 accountability 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 2024 accountability report and any other 2024 cost report they must submit.

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 February 7, 2024, should contact [CostInformationPFD@hhs.texas.gov](mailto: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 accountability report and/or cost report 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 has the ability to 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 report in STAIRS. They must have adequate time to prepare the report so that the entity may complete the final step in STAIRS and submit their 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 onto 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 and accountability 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 at <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**

HHSC will excuse reports that are verified as having performed no billable services during the provider's reporting period. If a report has been excused, a banner message will be displayed at the top of the State of Texas Automated Cost Reporting System (STAIRS) screen. 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 Provider Finance Department (PFD) LTSS team at [PFD-LTSS@hhs.texas.gov](mailto: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](mailto:CostInformationPFD@hhs.texas.gov)

Questions regarding Preparers, or the list of Preparers, should be directed to HHSC PFD [CostInformationPFD@hhs.texas.gov](mailto: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](mailto:info@fairbanksllc.com)

Questions regarding properly completing your accountability 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