

TRSnews

SUMMER 2024



THE NEWSLETTER of the TEACHER RETIREMENT SYSTEM of TEXAS



MEMBER EDITION

GET RETIREMENT READY: 2024-25 RETIREMENT SESSIONS

Whether you're considering retirement, have questions and need help filling out your forms, or just want to learn more about your TRS benefits, we have a session for you!

Visit the [Retirement Sessions](#) page on the TRS website to view schedules for:

- Retirement Benefit Presentations
- Field Office Visits (FOV)
- Group Office Visit Sessions
- Retirement Forms Sessions
- Various Life-Stages Presentations:
Introduction to TRS, Mid-Career, Ready to Retire

Please check the webpage frequently for the latest updates. There, you will find:

- Information and details on in-person and virtual events so you know which session works best for you
- Schedules, including information on locations, dates and times
- Registration deadlines and details (through [MyTRS](#) and by phone)



Register Today

Reservations are on a first-come, first-served basis, and must be made by the deadlines listed on the TRS website. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email with your scheduled date and time. TRS is the only contact to schedule meetings. **Please do not call meeting locations for information.**

Virtual Counseling Sessions

Don't want to wait for us to come to you? If you have a personal computer or tablet and an internet connection, you can schedule a virtual appointment at any time. Visit our website for more information about [meeting one-on-one with a TRS Counselor](#).

Session Success! Huge Thanks For Sharing Your Feedback On Your Experience!

*My experience was very pleasing. All explanations were easy to understand and all of my questions were answered to my satisfaction. **My counselor was amazing!! Great experience!!***

*It was a great experience. **Thank you** for the virtual offer.*

*The meeting was very pleasant and easier than I expected. **She was very helpful and patient.***

***It was perfect.** Our counselor was awesome, we were in and out in 45 min. The entire meeting was completely organized.*

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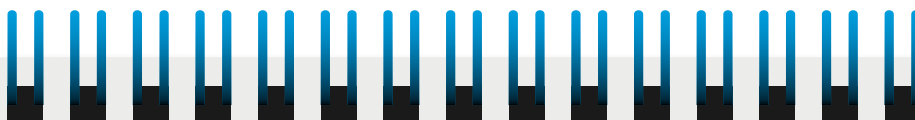
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From the Desk of
Executive Director
Brian K. Guthrie



Dear Members:

I hope you’ve enjoyed your summer this year. Having a little hiatus is also a good time to address any TRS homework you might have, such as studying your TRS resources! Taking advantage of the summer pace and being proactive about your retirement and health decisions make all the difference.

On our end, we continue our due diligence to provide the information you need whether on our website or in this newsletter. We have exciting news in this issue, including timely events that may be of interest to you and several ways you can connect with us this fall:

- Attend an upcoming retirement session
- Learn about the TRS-ActiveCare plan year beginning Sept. 1
- Nominate a candidate for the election of the Public School District Employee position on the TRS Board of Trustees

We’re here for you no matter where you are in your career or retirement journey.

This summer, I attended college orientation with my twins as they embark on their higher education journey. One hopes to be an engineer while the other wants to be a writer – both of their paths highly influenced by the special teachers they learned from in high school. It reminds me of the reason I’ve worked hard throughout my career and why the mission of TRS is so important.

I hope you experience many great moments this season! Staying informed about your TRS benefits will keep you on the right path for you and your family’s future.

Take care,
Brian

TRS SEEKS NOMINATIONS for TRS Board of Trustees Public School District Employee Position

TRS is now accepting nominations for eligible members to qualify as candidates for the election of the Public School District Employee position on the TRS Board of Trustees. The term begins as early as Sept. 1, 2025 and ends Aug. 31, 2031. An eligible member for this election is a current employee of a public school district, charter school, or regional education service center.

TRS offers two ways in which a nominee may collect the required 250 signatures of eligible members for nomination:

- A nominee may collect the 250 signatures **electronically** by declaring their interest to be a nominee to the [Secretary to the Board of Trustees](#). Once the member's eligibility is validated, the member's name will be posted on the [nomination site](#) where the nominee may direct eligible members to sign the nominee's electronic petition. The names of nominees will be posted on a first-come, first-listed basis. To sign the electronic petition, eligible members will need to provide identifying information in order to verify their eligibility to sign the petition. The process is easy and only takes a few minutes. For an electronic petition, the nominee does not need to submit anything further to TRS but must have 250 eligible member signatures by **Jan. 27, 2025** to be considered a candidate.
- TRS will also continue to allow nominees to collect 250 signatures of eligible members with **paper** petitions. TRS must receive the nominee's paper petitions no later than **Jan. 27, 2025**. You may download the [petition \(pdf\)](#) or if you do not have access to a printer, please contact the [Secretary to the Board of Trustees](#) to request a petition be mailed to you.

Nomination Timeline

Saturday, June 1, 2024

Online nomination site and hard copy petitions are available

Monday, Jan. 27, 2025

Deadline for submitting nominating petitions to TRS

Monday, Feb. 3, 2025 – Friday, Feb. 7, 2025

Drawing held to determine the order of candidates' names on the ballot

Election Timeline

Monday, March 17, 2025

Ballots mailed out on or before this date containing candidate biographical information

Monday, May 5, 2025

Deadline for receiving returned completed ballots – electronic or hard copy

Monday, May 26, 2025 – Friday, May 30, 2025

Independent committee reviews the election procedures and ballot count, including a visual inspection of ballots, to attest to the election results

Monday, May 26, 2025 – Friday, May 30, 2025

Names of up to three candidates who received the most votes in election, certified and sent to the governor

Monday, Sept. 1, 2025

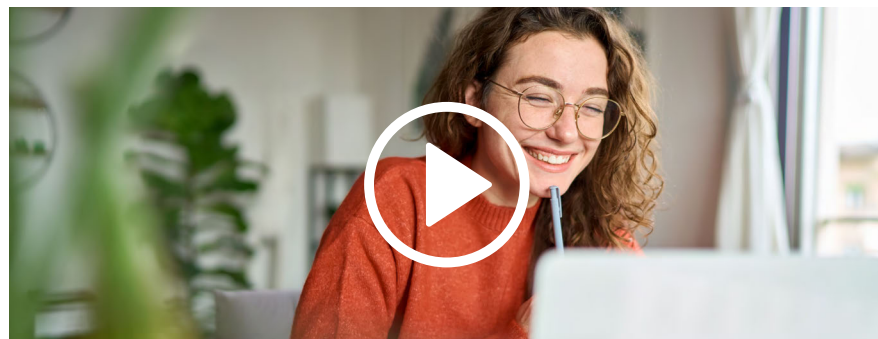
Earliest date that new board member will take office

Voting in the election will take place between March and May of 2025.

QUICK-START GUIDE for New TRS Members

To all our new members – welcome to TRS! As a new member, it's important to take specific actions at the start of your career. That's why we provide a new member checklist – so you have access to the resources you need to connect with your retirement system right from the start.

Get a head start this summer by visiting the [Quick-Start Guide for New TRS Members](#) where you can learn more about:



- **Registering** for MyTRS
- **Designating** a Beneficiary
- **Reviewing** Health Care Benefits
- **Reviewing** the TRS Benefits Handbook
- **Watching** TRS' Member Education Video Series
- **Visiting** the Life Event Resource Kit
- **Attending** an Introduction to TRS Presentation
- **Subscribing** to TRS Email Notifications
- **Connecting** with Us on Social Media

We look forward to staying connected with you throughout the course of your career!

GOVERNOR ABBOTT Names New Chair of TRS Board, Appoints New Trustee

Governor Greg Abbott has named Robert H. “Rob” Walls, Jr. as the new chair of the TRS Board of Trustees. The governor has also appointed John R. Rutherford as a new trustee to the board.



Robert H. “Rob” Walls, Jr., a business and legal executive with experience in the energy, media and private equity industries, will serve as the newest chairman of the TRS Board of Trustees. He joined the TRS Board in October 2019 and recently chaired the Audit, Compliance and Ethics Committee. Walls’ current six-year board term is set to expire Aug. 31, 2025.



John R. Rutherford replaces the position held by Jarvis V. Hollingsworth as the governor’s direct appointee. Rutherford most recently sat on the board of trustees for the Employees Retirement System of Texas (ERS) and has a decades-long background as an executive in the investment banking and energy business. He joined the TRS board for its regular July meeting. Rutherford’s term will expire Aug. 31, 2029.

The appointments come with the expiration of Jarvis V. Hollingsworth’s recent term as a direct appointment of the governor as chairman.

“Trustee Walls has deep experience leading professional organizations and investment entities. I am confident Mr. Walls’ acumen and dedication will continue to serve our active public education employees and retirees well in the period ahead. We also look forward to the contributions that Mr. Rutherford will make as the governor’s newest appointment to the TRS board.”

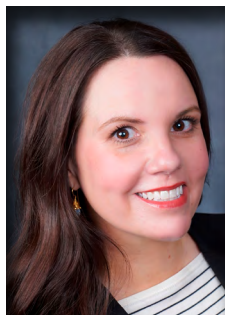
TRS Executive Director Brian Guthrie

The TRS Board of Trustees, trustee of all plan assets, is responsible for the general administration and operation of the system. The board is composed of [nine appointed members](#), who serve staggered terms of six years.

For more on the warm welcome, [read the news release](#) on the TRS website.

The recent appointments are not related to the [current open nomination period](#) for the expiring trustee position representing public school district employees. That nomination period will close Jan. 27, 2025 followed by the election to be held March 17 to May 5, 2025. (See article on page three for more information.)

TRS WELCOMES New Deputy Director



TRS is pleased to announce the hire of **Caasi Lamb** as the pension trust fund’s newest deputy director. Lamb replaces Andrew Roth who recently left TRS.

The new role marks a return to TRS for Lamb who began her tenure at the system in 2014 and had most recently served in the role of chief strategy officer.

The deputy director at TRS is responsible for overseeing the agency’s daily operations, coordinating strategic planning efforts and maintaining open communications with TRS trustees. The position also includes representing the agency to members, government officials and the public.

Read the complete [news release](#) on the TRS website.

“This is a very exciting time to be back at TRS. I am looking forward to reconnecting with the TRS team as we continue our focus on best serving public education employees and retirees as the largest pension trust fund in Texas and one of the top 10 in the nation.”

TRS Deputy Director Caasi Lamb

NEW TRS-ActiveCare Plan Year Begins Sept. 1

It's that time of year again – another TRS-ActiveCare plan year is about to begin! This means it's the perfect time to brush up on the resources and add-on benefits included in your plan.



TRS-ActiveCare Resources

- **Save the number for Personal Health Guides (PHGs) in your phone.** A PHG is your 24/7 customer support. They can answer billing questions, help you find providers, get you cost-estimates – anything TRS-ActiveCare! The number is 1-866-355-5999. [Learn more about PHGs.](#)
- **Download the BCBSTX app.** You can review your spending, claims, and status of authorizations and referrals. The app also offers another way to reach out to PHGs through a chat function.
- Check out BCBSTX's [“How To” video series!](#) These are short videos that **give you how-tos for different aspects of TRS-ActiveCare.**
- **Know common health care terms** so you make the most informed decision when picking a health plan. TRS' [Learn the Terms: Health Care Edition](#) video can get you ready.

These are just some of the benefits you have access to! To see a breakdown of all your benefits, check out this [BCBSTX resource hub](#).

TRS-ActiveCare Add-on Benefits

Here are some benefits provided at no extra cost to you!

- **Fitness Programs:** You can choose from hundreds of gym memberships at a discount! Memberships start as low as \$19/month and there are digital-only options too. Learn more about the [fitness program](#).
- **Robust Mental Health Resources:** You have coverage for in-person and virtual mental health visits. If you sign up for TRS-ActiveCare Primary or Primary+, this includes a \$0 copay for virtual mental health visits! But in any plan, you have access to anxiety and stress management programs, a digital mental health program called Learn to Live, and more. [Explore your mental health benefits.](#)
- **One-on-One Coaching:** If you want a little extra help, TRS-ActiveCare includes one-on-one support from a wellness coach. Programs range from stress management to weight loss and nutrition to cholesterol improvement. [See all coaching options.](#)
- **Women's Health:** Ovia Health is a benefit that is all things women's health no matter what stage of life you're in. You can get help with everything from family planning to postpartum depression to menopause. [Learn about your women's health coverage.](#)

5 TIMELY TIPS from the Ombuds Office

Did you know? August means **inspiring reverence or admiration**. TRS is inspired by our members, and we admire the work of our retired and active members in preparing past, current and future leaders.

We're here to serve you and meet your needs. If you're unable to obtain information through normal TRS channels or are unhappy with the customer service you received, the Ombuds Office is always here to help!

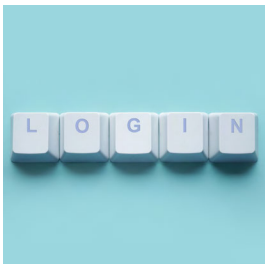
Here are timely tips that address some common questions.



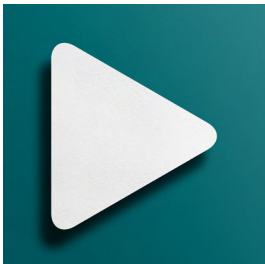
1. The **TRS website** (www.trs.texas.gov) is an excellent resource for quick answers to simple questions. “How can I name a beneficiary?” “What are my health benefit options?” “When will I receive my annuity payment?” Answers to questions like these—and many more—are available at the click of a button.



2. The **TRS Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) webpage** provides quick answers or refreshers on important topics such as the new pharmacy benefits manager (Express Scripts), TRS-Care 2024 plan details, TRS-Care eligibility and enrollment, employment after retirement (EAR), establishing your *MyTRS* account, retirement estimates, and TRS' benefit calculator. From the homepage of the TRS website, simply click any of the menu options across the top of the page, then “FAQs” in the far-right section.



3. The **MyTRS** (<https://mytrs.texas.gov>) **member portal** provides the safest, quickest and easiest way to verify and update your contact information any time. After logging in, you can make changes to your address, email and phone number as needed. Keeping this information up to date can prevent delays in receiving your annual statement, 1099-R, 1095-B, and other important documents.



4. Our Member **Education Video Series** provides answers and information to the most frequently asked questions about TRS member pension benefits. Whether you're new to TRS, or are a veteran of many years, our video series can help guide you and answer many of your questions as you navigate throughout your career and beyond!



5. Last but certainly not least, remember that our **processing time frames** are posted on our website and routinely updated to ensure you can appropriately plan the submission of your documents; know when they will be processed; and prevent unnecessary delays.

If you have a question or concern that you would like the Ombuds to consider for inclusion in a future issue of *TRS News*, please email Ombuds@trs.texas.gov. We'd love to hear from you!

TRUSTEES APPROVE New Strategic Asset Allocation (SAA)

New allocation recommendations aim to make the TRS pension fund more resilient

Deliberative, intensive, transparent, and thoughtful – four words that accurately describe the nearly year-long strategic asset allocation (SAA) study that TRS’ investment teams recently completed. The study’s goal was to make your pension trust fund more balanced and more resilient while continuing to achieve the 7% investment return assumption. At July’s board of trustees’ meeting, trustees received staff recommendations and approved the newest SAA.

“Following our thorough SAA study including a survey of capital market assumptions over the last nine months we believe the changes make the portfolio more robust to potential scenarios we could see in the future,”

Mike Simmons, head of trust strategy in the Investment Management Division.

In short, the recommended SAA provides an updated investment approach that our investment management professionals use to make and oversee the wisest possible investment decisions for our members’ futures. In this case, the SAA looks out about five years to identify allocations with a high probability of meeting the fund’s risk and return goals.

Like the most recent allocation adjustments made in 2019, the latest SAA aims to rebalance long-term investment risk with expectations of how much TRS can earn from investments. In fact, over six out of every ten dollars that are in the fund today have come from investments. The remainder comes from contributions from the state, the member’s employer and active public education employees.

The recommended SAA:

- Makes changes to the government bond portfolio so the fund is **less sensitive to inflation** while being better able to capture the upside of economic growth
- Shifts to holding more public equity and a slightly lower allocation to private equity **to improve the fund’s liquidity**
- **Maintains exposure to emerging** markets but at a smaller size

A Thoughtful Process

An internal TRS group called Risk and Portfolio Management (RPM) puts a considerable amount of sustained thought and time into identifying just the right themes for any modified SAA. A lot has happened in global financial markets since TRS’ last SAA process. Consider the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic and the trend that emerged of more people working from home. More recently there has been rising inflation and higher interest rates.

During TRS’ 2024 SAA study, the RPM group solicited views from within the investment community and gathered data from pension peers. The team looked at other factors too like how much the pension fund has grown, how much more sophisticated TRS investments are, along with current and projected funded status and contribution rates.

The SAA is so important in fact, it is enshrined in TRS’ [Investment Policy Statement](#):

The Investment Division will assist the board in engaging in an asset-liability study for the pension plan at least once every five (5) years to review asset classes, return-risk assumptions, and correlation of returns with applicable benchmarks and across asset classes.

Changes to TRS’ investment policy that reflect the new SAA are set for board adoption in September. Implementing the changes to asset classes will take six months.

Read more about TRS’ SAA Study from the July 2024 TRS Board of Trustees’ meeting.
Phrase search “Strategic Asset Allocation” or “SAA.”

RETIRE HEALTHY Webinar on Oct. 23

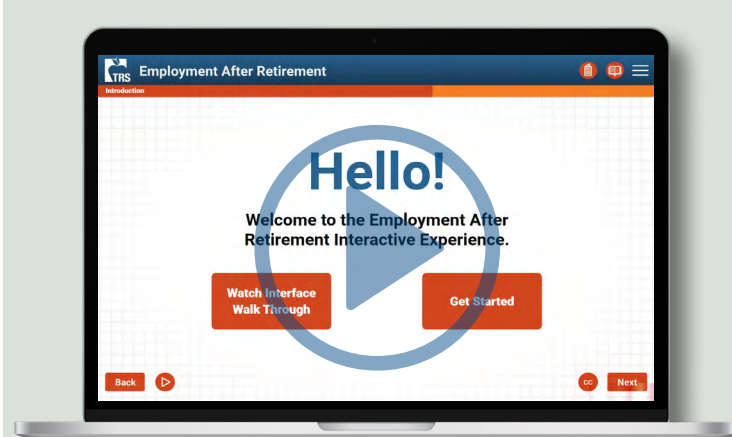


This quarterly webinar will help you make a fully informed decision about health care during your retirement years. You'll get:

- an overview of TRS-Care and the different plans it offers;
- a review of eligibility criteria and the enrollment process; and
- information on what to expect after you enroll in TRS-Care.

Register for Retire Healthy at [TRS Health Events](#).

KNOWLEDGE CHECK! Working After Retirement



Inside These Resources:

- Service and Disability Retirement
- Mandatory One-Month Break in Service
- June 15 Rule
- EAR Exceptions
- Volunteering
- Surcharges

Click either image for more.

If you're thinking about returning to work for a TRS-covered employer after retirement, there are some key considerations you should know.

Our Employment After Retirement (EAR) resources cover the facts and will help you make decisions to avoid revoking your retirement or forfeiting your annuity payments.

Our [EAR video](#) will help you find the information you need to comply with the rules on working after retirement. With this tool, you can quickly and conveniently navigate to the information you need based on your situation. All you need to do is choose

your path for service or disability retirement and information will unfold based on your retirement date. You will also find helpful practice scenarios to test your knowledge and understanding. *Please note that Google Chrome is the browser that will give you the best experience with this video.*

You can also reference more detailed information in the [TRS EAR brochure](#) at any time.

Together, we can make sure you're on the right track when returning to work.

RETIRING SOON? Check Out These Events

Health Education Fairs

Join us and our partners at a TRS-Care Health Education Fair this fall! We'll host 22 in-person fairs throughout Texas from Aug. 21 to Oct. 10. From these fairs, you can expect the following takeaways:

- Chats with TRS-Care health plan vendors
- New knowledge about TRS retiree health plans
- Health benefits presentations
- Getting a head start on Medicare
- Dental and vision education
- Wellness program awareness

You can hear directly from those who administer the TRS-Care health plans. This includes:

- TRS
- Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas (TRS-Care Standard)
- UnitedHealthcare (TRS-Care Medicare Advantage)
- Express Scripts (pharmacy coverage)
- MetLife (dental and vision)

To find a date and location near you, visit [TRS Health Events](#).

2025 TRS-Care Information Sessions

If you can't join us for a health education fair, you have the opportunity to connect with us online! We'll be hosting virtual information sessions in September and October.

These will be separated into sessions for TRS-Care Standard (plan for under-65 and non-Medicare eligible), TRS-Care Medicare Advantage (age 65 and up and Medicare eligible), and TRS-Care Dental and TRS-Care Vision.

Register for an information session at [TRS Health Events](#).



NEW Retiree Health Benefits Available

One in 43 Texans already trust TRS to be the health care they can count on. And now, TRS has two more reliable plans that can enhance our retirees' everyday health – TRS-Care Dental and TRS-Care Vision!

These new plans will offer extensive provider networks and benefits to help you see and smile with confidence as you explore new adventures.

You don't need to be enrolled in a TRS-Care medical plan to enroll in the dental or vision benefit plans. However, you need to be a Texas public school retiree, or a dependent of a retiree, who is eligible for TRS-Care.

You also don't need to enroll in both – these are two separate plans. You could choose to enroll in just dental or vision – or both!

Learn more at [TRS-Care Dental and Vision](#).



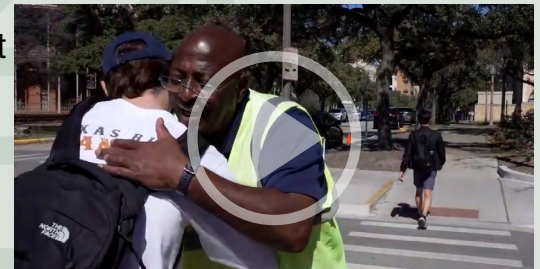
“TRS TALKS” Stories That Will Make You Smile

These videos in our member spotlight series “TRS Talks” are all about music and smiles. Watch now to be enlightened, and maybe for even a little inspiration to pick up your musical instrument.



In “[Banding Together: Three Generations Stir Up Trebel](#),” former Dahlstrom Middle School Band Director Leroy Gerdes retired but isn’t missing a beat! He now volunteers at the school alongside current band director Rachel Janek and student teacher Frank DeLeon. Watch now to see how a trio of educators, from three generations, are stirring up treble to make sweet music.

And, in “[Joy at Work](#),” we feature University of Texas Empowerment Program Ambassador, Michael Shaw. See how the campus celebrity touches lives each day by extending smiles, high-fives and words of encouragement as he goes about his work in the parking services department.



Do you know a TRS member, retired or active, who would be a great feature subject?
Let us know by emailing communications@trs.texas.gov.

KEEP YOUR INFORMATION SAFE When Using Social Media

Many of us share a lot of what happens in our daily lives on social media sites (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, X, etc.) with family and friends. Sharing that we are on vacation, it’s our Xth birthday, it’s our retirement day, etc., are popular posts. But have you ever wondered who has eyes on the information we share?

Because all information posted on social media sites is available to anyone who searches for us or stumbles upon our social media page, many of us keep our pages private or send personal details through private message (PM)/direct message (DM). Although these features may make us feel more protected, and although many people will not see these messages, **please be aware that the information in these PMs/DMs are not private.**

Administrators, and other third-party providers, have access to all messages regardless of whether your account is private or you send information to another via PM or DM.

Bad actors can gather information from your private site and messages and combine it with publicly available information. They can use this information themselves or sell it to others who may use this information to hack into or set up fraudulent accounts, including hacking into your *MyTRS* account or creating a *MyTRS* account in your name.

Avoid putting your information in danger: Please do not share personally identifiable information (e.g., social security number) or health information (e.g., enrollment, prescription, medical) on any social media site when communicating with TRS. We do not want social media site administrators or other third-party platforms to see your private information. **Keeping your information safe and secure is our top priority.**

Contact TRS with your pension or health questions and concerns.

NOTICE of Privacy Practices (NPP)

Federal law requires TRS to maintain and protect the privacy of your health information. Your protected health information is individually identifiable health information, including genetic information and demographic information, collected from you or created or received by TRS.

The Notice of Privacy Practices (NPP) explains how TRS may use and disclose your protected health information, as well

as your rights and the obligations of TRS, with respect to that information.

The NPP includes companies that may assist TRS with the operations of TRS-Care and TRS-ActiveCare.

Visit the NPP at https://www.trs.texas.gov/TRS%20Documents/notice_privacy_practices.pdf.

NOTICE of Summary of Benefits and Coverage

Summary of Benefits and Coverage (SBC) Now Available

A Summary of Benefits and Coverage provides an overview of the benefits and services your health plan covers and what you can expect to pay for these services by the end of the year. The SBCs are available for TRS-ActiveCare and TRS-Care Standard (excluding Medicare Advantage plans).

TRS-ActiveCare Participants: SBCs for the TRS-ActiveCare 2024-25 plan year through Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas (BCBSTX) are at <https://www.bcbstx.com/trsactivecare/coverage>.

TRS-Care Standard Participants: SBCs for the 2024 TRS-Care Standard plan year are at <https://www.bcbstx.com/trscarestandard/coverage>. 2025 TRS-Care Standard SBCs through BCBSTX will be available by the end of 2025.

If you have questions about your benefits or want a paper copy of an SBC, free of charge, please call:

- TRS-ActiveCare (BCBSTX) Customer Service: 1-866-355-5999
- TRS-Care Standard (BCBSTX) Customer Service: 1-866-355-5999
- Hearing-impaired people should dial Relay 711

Have Other Questions? For more information on TRS-Care enrollment and eligibility, please contact the TRS Health Department at 1-888-237-6762. For more information on TRS-ActiveCare enrollment and eligibility, please contact your Benefits Administrator.

NEW Rules Adopted by the Board of Trustees

At the May 2, 2024 board meeting, trustees adopted new rules **41.15 Optional Dental Benefits Plan** and **41.16 Optional Vision Benefits Plan**. Adopted rules were published in the Texas Register and became effective on May 26, 2024. Both rules were implemented to comply with Senate Bill (S.B.) 1854, 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023. This bill created a new section in Chapter 1575 of the Insurance Code (TRS-Care) that requires TRS to offer an optional plan that provides coverage for dental care and an optional plan that provides coverage for vision care for individuals eligible for TRS-Care.

Under the new rules these plans will have the following features:

- Plans may be offered through an insurance carrier or a self-funding method and may have one or more benefit designs for participants to choose from;

- Only retirees and dependents, surviving spouses, and surviving dependent children of retirees are eligible to enroll;
- The Plan year is from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31;
- There will be an open enrollment period for retirees to elect coverage;
- Disenrollment will only be offered during an open or special enrollment period;
- Payment of the participants' monthly contributions will be made through an annuity deduction or direct payment to TRS or its designee;
- The effective date of coverage varies depending on the specific enrollment timing;
- There is a process to address expulsion for fraud; and
- Contracts to provide these services will be issued through a competitive bidding process.

TRS Word Scramble

Unscramble the letters to reveal a hidden message.

LNAUNA ETESATNTMS ERA MCOGNI OT
SRT EBMRSEM TALRE TSIH LAFL! KPEE
NA EY NO YROU AIXLMBO RO SMTYR
TACOCNU OFR UOYR POYC.



Answer located at the bottom of this page.

Solved the puzzle? [Click to learn more!](#)

Follow TRS



Click [Here](#) to Rate This Issue of TRS News!

MISS A TRS BOARD MEETING? We've Got You Covered

We provide access to on-demand viewing of TRS board meeting webcasts. This allows you to watch previous presentations whenever you want!

Find references, website links and webcast archives that provide more information on board decisions at https://www.trs.texas.gov/Pages/board_meeting_webcasts.aspx.

For key discussion highlights, you may also wish to read our board summaries, available after each meeting, at https://www.trs.texas.gov/Pages/board_meeting_summary.aspx.

