

BUREAU OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE FACT SHEET

PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS' BENEFITS PROGRAM

The Bureau of Justice Assistance's Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Office is honored to review the more than 1,200 claims submitted each year on behalf of America's fallen and catastrophically disabled public safety heroes and their loved ones.

A unique effort of the U.S. Department of Justice; local, state, federal, and tribal public safety agencies; and national organizations, the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program provides death benefits to the survivors of law enforcement officers, firefighters, and other first responders whose death (or catastrophic injury) was the direct and proximate result of an injury sustained in the line of duty. To determine these claims, the PSOB Office works closely with survivors, injured officers, and agencies to obtain the required documentation to comply with the PSOB law and its implementing regulations. While some claims are straightforward and clearly meet the criteria, others present significant factual and legal complexities that must be resolved before a determination can be made.

The PSOB Office collaborates with national law enforcement, firefighter, and first responder groups to provide a range of PSOB training and technical assistance, from one-to-one mentoring to conferences and online resources.

On August 16, 2022, President Biden signed the Public Safety Officer Support Act of 2022, recognizing for the first time in the history of the PSOB Program the impact of exposures to traumatic events to public safety officers and their mental health and well-being, including the consideration of claims for officer death (or catastrophic injury) due to suicide (or an attempt to die by suicide).



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PSOB Programs

Death Benefits

PSOB provides a one-time benefit to eligible survivors of public safety officers whose deaths were the direct result of an injury sustained in the line of duty on or after September 29, 1976.

Disability Benefits

PSOB provides a one-time benefit to eligible public safety officers who were permanently and totally disabled as a result of a catastrophic injury sustained in the line of duty on or after November 29, 1990. Injuries must permanently prevent officers from performing any gainful work in the future.

Education Benefits

PSOB provides support for higher education to eligible spouses and children of public safety officers who died in the line of duty or were catastrophically disabled in the line of duty.



PSOB Claims Process

The PSOB Office launched PSOB 2.0, a web-based claims portal designed to streamline the application submission and claims review process for PSOB Program applicants.

- A **PSOB Death Benefits** application consists of two parts: a Part A application completed by the applicant or authorized representative and a Part B application completed by the public safety agency. The web-based application will generate a customized set of questions and required documents for each individual application. A sample PSOB Death Benefits application can be viewed by visiting www.psob.gov/benefits.
- A **PSOB Disability Benefits** application consists of two parts: a Part A application completed by the officer or authorized representative and a Part B application completed by the public safety agency. The web-based application will generate a customized set of questions and required documents for each individual application. A sample PSOB Disability Benefits application can be viewed by visiting www.psob.gov/benefits.
- **PSOB Education Benefits** (PSOEA) are available to public safety officers' spouses and children for 45 months of full-time education or training or for a proportional period of time for a part-time program. The first step in filing for PSOEA benefits is the submission and approval of an initial prescreen application, which confirms program eligibility. After the prescreen application is approved, an initial payment application is submitted along with additional documents and information. To view sample PSOEA applications, visit www.psob.gov/benefits.

Below are the key steps in the review of a PSOB claim:

1. Survivors/officers/representatives create an online account and submit an application (Part A) in PSOB 2.0. The agency also submits its application (Part B) in PSOB 2.0.
2. PSOB reviews the applications for completeness and contacts applicants regarding any missing documents.
3. Once all required documents are submitted, a claim number is assigned, the case is reviewed, and a determination is prepared.
4. The determination and documentation undergo a Senior Benefits Specialist, PSOB Director, and legal review.
5. When a decision is final, PSOB mails a copy of the determination and notification letters to the survivors/officer and to the agency.

6. If approved, the benefit is paid by the U.S. Department of the Treasury via direct deposit. If not approved, detailed information is provided regarding the appeal process.

Appeals

The Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program allows claimants whose claims are denied at the PSOB Office level to appeal the decision at two levels of administrative appeal: the Hearing Officer level and the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) Director level. Claimants have 33 days to appeal their initial denial, as well as 33 days to appeal to the BJA Director.

PSOB Benefits

Since 1976, more than \$2.4 billion has been paid in death and disability benefits through the PSOB Program. In recent years, PSOB has provided benefits for public safety officers whose deaths and catastrophic injuries are linked to exposure to harmful chemicals during rescue, recovery, and cleanup efforts following September 11, 2001. The most recent surge of death claims has resulted from COVID-19, with more than 1,000 cases filed for officers who have died from COVID or its complications.

Contact PSOB

The PSOB website is found at psob.bja.ojp.gov. To speak with someone regarding the PSOB Program or a claim please call 1-888-744-6513 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., eastern time, or email AskPSOB@usdoj.gov.

ABOUT BJA

BJA helps America's state, local, and tribal jurisdictions reduce and prevent crime, lower recidivism, and promote a fair and safe criminal justice system. BJA provides a wide range of resources—including grants, funding, and training and technical assistance—to law enforcement, courts and corrections agencies, treatment providers, reentry practitioners, justice information sharing professionals, and community-based partners to address chronic and emerging criminal justice challenges nationwide. To learn more about BJA, visit bjja.ojp.gov or follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/DOJBJA) and Twitter (@DOJBJA). BJA is a component of the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs.