



Bureau of Justice Assistance
Office of Justice Programs ■ U.S. Department of Justice
Solutions for Safer Communities

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Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program



Note: As of October 1, 2005, the death benefit amount is \$283,385.

[Checklist for Public Safety Agencies Filing a PSOB Death Claim](#)

[Report of Public Safety Officer's Death](#)

[Claim Form for PSOB Death Benefits](#)

[Consent to Release Information Form](#)

The Report and Claim forms may now be completed and submitted online at: <https://www.psob.gov>.

[Claim Form for PSOB Disability Benefits](#)

[Claim Form for PSOB Education Benefits](#)

Enacted in 1976, the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Act (codified at [42 U.S.C. 3796, et seq.](#)):

- Assists in the recruitment and retention of qualified public safety officers.
- Establishes the value that communities place on contributions from those who are willing to serve their communities during potentially dangerous circumstances.
- Offers peace of mind to men and women who are seeking careers in public safety.

The PSOB Program provides [death benefits](#) in the form of a one-time financial payment to the eligible survivors of public safety officers whose deaths are the direct and proximate result of a traumatic injury sustained in the line of duty. As of October 1, 2005, the benefit amount is \$283,385. Since October 15, 1988, the benefit has been adjusted each year on October 1 to reflect the percentage of change in the Consumer Price Index. For each death and disability claim, the award amount is solely determined by the actual date of the officer's death or disability.

The PSOB Program provides [disability benefits](#) for public safety officers who have been permanently and totally disabled by a catastrophic personal injury sustained in the line of duty if that injury permanently prevents the officer from performing **any** substantial and gainful work. Medical retirement for a line-of-duty disability does not, in and of itself, establish eligibility for PSOB benefits.

The PSOB Program includes the Public Safety Officers' Educational Assistance (PSOEA) Act. This act expands on the former Federal Law Enforcement Dependents Assistance Program to provide financial assistance for higher [education](#) for the spouses and children of federal, state, and local public safety officers who have been permanently disabled or killed in the line of duty. Educational assistance through the PSOEA Program is only available to the spouse or children of a public safety officer after the PSOB death or disability claim process has been completed and benefits have been awarded. The educational assistance may be used to defray relevant expenses, including tuition and fees, room and board, books, supplies, and other education-related costs. As of October 1, 2005, the maximum award for a full-time student is \$827 per month of class attendance. All PSOEA awards must, by law, be reduced by the amount of other governmental assistance that a student is eligible to receive.

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As defined by Congress in Public Law 90-351 (Sec. 1217), a public safety officer is an individual serving a public agency in an official capacity, with or without compensation, as a law enforcement officer, firefighter, or member of a rescue squad or ambulance crew. In October 2000, Public Law 106-390 (Sec. 305) designated employees of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as public safety officers under the PSOB Act if they were performing official, hazardous duties related to a declared major disaster or emergency. The legislation also indicated that state, local, or tribal emergency management or civil defense agency employees working in cooperation with FEMA are, under the same circumstances, considered public safety officers under the PSOB Act. Retroactive to September 11, 2001, chaplains also are included in the PSOB Act definition of a [public safety officer](#).

The PSOB office works with national-level police and firefighter groups to provide visibility and emotional support to this unique constituency. [Concerns of Police Survivors \(COPS\), Inc.](#), provides services and assistance for families and coworkers of fallen law enforcement officers during the annual National Police Week program. They also provide regional training sessions and several special seminars and extended programs for spouses, siblings, and children of slain officers. The [National Fallen Firefighters Foundation](#) provides peer counseling, training, and technical assistance for the families and coworkers of firefighters who were killed in the line of duty. Some of their specific activities include developing and disseminating publications and reference materials for survivors and senior fire department managers and creating a public awareness strategy to promote the fire service and its critical role in public safety.

Attorney Fee Information

Claimants seeking benefits through the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program sometimes engage legal representation to assist them with their cases at the initial claims level and, if denied, at the appeals level. In these cases, once a decision has been made on a PSOB claim, the attorney is sent a "fee petition" letter requesting that an itemization of services in connection with the PSOB claim be submitted to the PSOB Office, as well as to the attorney's client.

As authorized by the PSOB Act, the Office of Justice Programs' Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) prescribes the maximum fee a representative may charge a claimant for such services; contracts for a stipulated fee and contingent fee arrangements are especially prohibited by the PSOB regulations.

To achieve the intent of the PSOB Program and conserve benefits that have been awarded to survivors, a maximum rate of \$100 per hour of legal services has been established for PSOB claims at the initial level. For appeals, which require more detailed work, the maximum rate is \$125 per hour. Once BJA has reviewed the submitted fee petition, the attorney and claimant are notified as to the authorized fee amount.