



A unique effort of the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice; local, state, tribal, and federal public safety agencies; and national organizations, the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program provides death and education benefits to survivors of fallen law enforcement officers, firefighters, and other first responders, and disability benefits to officers catastrophically injured in the line of duty. The Hometown Heroes Survivors Benefits Act, and later the Dale Long PSOB Improvements Act of 2012, expanded program coverage to include certain heart attacks, strokes, and vascular ruptures. BJA's PSOB Office is honored to review the nearly 1,000 claims submitted each year on behalf of America's fallen and catastrophically disabled public safety heroes and their loved ones.

The amount of the PSOB benefit is \$359,316.00 for eligible deaths and disabilities occurring on or after October 1, 2018. The amount of the PSOB educational assistance benefit per month of full-time attendance on or after October 1, 2018 is \$1,224.00.

### **Heart Attacks, Strokes, and Vascular Ruptures**

In general, the PSOB law provides a *presumption* of injury and causation when a public safety officer suffers a fatal heart attack, stroke, or vascular rupture within 24 hours of engaging in certain nonroutine stressful or strenuous physical public safety activities, or participating in nonroutine physically stressful or strenuous training exercises while on duty.

#### Training Exercise

- The officer formally participates as a trainee or trainer in a structured activity within an **official training** (or fitness) **program of the officer's agency and**
- The structured activity is **required** by the agency, **officially tested, graded, or timed** by the agency, *or* directly **supervised, proctored, or monitored**, for example, by a member of the agency in the vicinity of the trainee.

#### Fitness Program

- The **official fitness program** is captured in a **policy, plan, process, or system** to train officers in fitness activities to a particular standard; is **officially sponsored, conducted or authorized** by the agency the officer serves; and is intended to train officers in **specific fitness activities** relevant to the officer's line of duty. Key elements of an official fitness program include:
  - ✓ Title of Fitness Program
  - ✓ Statement of Purpose
  - ✓ Description of Requirements, Goals, Objectives
  - ✓ Approved Fitness Activities
  - ✓ Performance Standards
  - ✓ Evaluation, Supervision, Monitoring Method
  - ✓ Approving Official
  - ✓ Effective Date

### **The Bottom Line**

Experience has demonstrated that basic documentation outlining a public safety agency's official training and fitness programs can make all the difference to survivors being eligible to receive PSOB benefits. The law and regulations governing the PSOB Program are available at <https://psob.bja.ojp.gov/law-and-regulations/>.