

**Filing a “Hometown Heroes” Claim
Public Safety Officers’ Benefits Office
Bureau of Justice Assistance**

A CHECKLIST FOR FIRE DEPARTMENTS

The Public Safety Officers’ Benefits (PSOB) Act provides a one-time financial benefit to the eligible survivors of public safety officers whose deaths were the direct and proximate result of a personal injury sustained in the line of duty on or after September 29, 1976. As of December 15, 2003, under the Hometown Heroes Survivors Benefits Act, public safety officer deaths from qualifying heart attacks and strokes are also covered. Based on the law’s requirements and implementing regulations, the following checklist is provided to help you collect the documents and information to file a “Hometown Heroes” claim—and to help reduce the time it takes to do so.

PART A: DEPARTMENT INFORMATION

1. **Complete the *PSOB Report of Public Safety Officer’s Death* form and have it signed by the head of the Fire Department.**

TIPS

- Find and print this report online at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/grant/psob/death_rpt.pdf OR you can now apply online at <https://www.psob.gov/default.aspx>.
- Check to see that every field on the form has been completed.
- If submitted in hard copy, check that the form has been signed.
- Be sure to identify any other benefits the public safety officer’s survivors have received, or are entitled to receive as a result of the officer’s death, as requested on the form.

2. **Provide documentation to support the volunteer status of the department, as applicable.**

TIP

- Visit www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/grant/psob/VolFFStatus_Instructions.pdf for specific instructions regarding how to prepare this document.

3. **Prepare a statement, on department letterhead, and signed by the department head, accounting for the 24-hour period prior to the onset of the officer’s heart attack or stroke. Have the statement note the hours the officer was on duty, and give detailed information on all of the officer’s *on-duty actions* during that time.**

TIPS

- This is one of the most important pieces of information the PSOB Office needs to fully review this claim. The statement you prepare should “tell the story” regarding what happened to the fallen officer, and include all unique details or circumstances regarding any nonroutine stressful or strenuous physical activity that may have taken place.
- Because the Hometown Heroes Act identifies a 24-hour “window” to review for actions, this information is critical to a review of claims submitted under the Act.
- For a brief “reminder” of the Act’s requirements [42 U.S.C. 3796(k)], see below:

(k) For purposes of this section, if a public safety officer dies as the direct and proximate result of a heart attack or stroke, that officer shall be presumed to have died as the direct and proximate result of a personal injury sustained in the line of duty, if—

(1) that officer, while on duty—

(A) engaged in a situation, and such engagement involved nonroutine stressful or strenuous

physical law enforcement, fire suppression, rescue, hazardous material response, emergency medical services, prison security, disaster relief, or other emergency response activity; or

(B) participated in a training exercise, and such participation involved nonroutine stressful or strenuous physical activity;

(2) that officer died as a result of a heart attack or stroke suffered—

(A) while engaging or participating as described under paragraph (1);

(B) while still on that duty after so engaging or participating; or

(C) not later than 24 hours after so engaging or participating; and

(3) such presumption is not overcome by competent medical evidence to the contrary.

(l) For purposes of subsection (k), "nonroutine stressful or strenuous physical" excludes actions of a clerical, administrative, or nonmanual nature.

- Visit www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/grant/psob/PSOB_Act_and_Regulations_2007_rev.html for the PSOB Act and regulations, including definitions.

4. Provide all investigation, incident and/or accident reports for the officer's on-duty activities in the 24 hours prior to his or her heart attack or stroke.

TIPS

- These are reports that would have already been prepared, and can simply be copied and included in the packet. Make sure that copies are legible, and all pages are provided.
- Should any of these reports not exist, prepare a brief statement that no such reports were created.
- Review the reports for any unique expressions or abbreviations that might have been used, and provide a "key" to help the PSOB Office more quickly review and understand what is being said in the reports.

5. Provide medical documentation about any response to the heart attack or stroke (like an ambulance run sheet) and any treatment of the officer prior to his death.

TIP

- If no information is available regarding the response or treatment, note and submit on department letterhead.

6. Include an autopsy report and toxicology report, if available. If these reports do not exist, provide a statement signed by the head of the department (or the medical examiner) explaining that no autopsy and/or toxicology was performed.

TIP

- When no autopsy and/or toxicology was performed, departments often overlook providing this statement to the PSOB Office—please check twice to ensure that it's included.

7. Include a copy of the officer's death certificate.

TIP

- While most PSOB claims are submitted with a death certificate, sometimes it is illegible or contains information inconsistent with other documentation submitted. Review the death certificate carefully, and provide any follow up information, if necessary.

PART B: SURVIVOR INFORMATION

1. Have the survivor/claimant complete the *PSOB Claim for Death Benefits* form.

TIPS

- Find and print this form online at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/grant/psob/death_claim.pdf OR it can be completed online at <https://www.psob.gov/default.aspx>.
 - Check to see that every field in the form has been completed.
 - If submitted in hard copy, check that the form has been signed.
2. Provide the officer's current marriage certificate, if applicable. If the officer was divorced, provide divorce decrees for all the officer's—and current spouse's—previous marriages, including references to physical custody of any children, if applicable.

TIP

- If any of the officer's and current spouse's previous marriages ended in death, death certificates for *those* spouses need to be included with the PSOB claim as well.
3. Provide birth certificates for all the fallen officer's surviving children and step-children, *regardless of age or dependency*, identifying the children's parents, if applicable.

TIP

- Survivor information takes time to collect, often involving multiple outreach efforts to obtain. Never hesitate to call the PSOB Office with any questions you might have regarding identifying and collecting survivor information.

Because no two PSOB claims are alike, other documentation, including medical records, may be requested. If this occurs, the PSOB Office will contact you to discuss the requested information.

*While the PSOB Office hopes that no department ever requires our services,
we stand ready to assist you throughout the claim process.
Thank you for your own public safety efforts that serve to keep America safe.*