

## **Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program**

Enacted in 1976, the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program:

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

A unique effort of the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), Office of Justice Programs (OJP), U.S. Department of Justice; local, state, tribal, and federal public safety agencies; and national organizations, the PSOB Program provides death and education benefits to survivors of fallen law enforcement officers, firefighters, and other first responders, as well as disability benefits to officers catastrophically injured in the line of duty.

BJA's PSOB Office is responsible for reviewing nearly 700 death, disability, and education claims submitted annually. The PSOB Office also collaborates with national firefighter, law enforcement, and first responder groups to offer a wide range of PSOB training and technical assistance resources, through conferences, seminars, and printed materials, to support survivors and agencies of America's fallen public safety officers.

### **Review Process**

1. Survivors ("Claimants") and the fallen public safety officer's agency<sup>1</sup>, often along with the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation or Concerns of Police Survivors, work together to initiate a PSOB claim.
2. The PSOB Office receives initial information submitted regarding the circumstances of the death.

3. The PSOB Office reaches out to the agency or survivors for all basic required documents to continue the review of the case.

4. As needed, the PSOB Office works with forensic pathologists and medical specialists to review autopsy, toxicology, and other medical records to understand any medical issues relevant to the determination of the case.

5. The PSOB Office works with BJA's PSOB Legal Counsel to determine if the circumstances of the death meet the requirements of the law and regulations.

6. Once a decision is made, the PSOB Office mails a copy of the Determination and notification letters to the Claimants and agency.

7. If approved, the benefit is paid by the Treasury Department to the eligible Claimants. If not approved, the PSOB Office Determination provides detailed information regarding the PSOB appeals process.

### **Performance Measures**

BJA is currently reporting the results of two key performance measures: 1) the average time to receive basic required claim documents from agencies and survivors, and 2) the average time to review and determine a claim, once all basic required documents are received. The following data reflects all death and disability claims filed in FY 2013 (October 1, 2012 – September 30, 2013).

The PSOB Office received a total of 294 death claims, and 90 disability claims, for a total of 384 death and disability claims in this reporting period.

### **About the Data**

For purposes of Performance Measure I, all basic required documents refer to the documents listed on the "*PSOB Checklist for Filing a PSOB Death Benefits*

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<sup>1</sup> For disability claims, Claimants are officers injured in the line of duty.

*Claim*” and “*PSOB Checklist for Filing a PSOB Disability Benefits Claim*” ([www.psob.gov](http://www.psob.gov)). Based on the circumstances and complexity of a case, other documents may be required, which are requested in a subsequent review stage. Cases may also continue through the review process, and be returned for clarification or additional information related to the basic documents collected earlier in the review.

PSOB cases are often not determined to an outcome (approval or non-approval) in the same Fiscal Year in which they are filed, especially those cases received in the PSOB Office in the third and fourth quarters of a Fiscal Year.

FY 2013 cases that did not meet the criteria of the performance measurement data reported below remain under review.

#### **Performance Measure I**

##### **Average time to receive basic required documents.**

Performance Measure I is the amount of time in days from when a claim is assigned to a PSOB Outreach Specialist, until the basic required documents related to the claim have been received.

As of May 1, 2014, there were 288 FY 2013 death and disability claims for which outreach for required documents was completed. Of these 288 claims, 247 were death claims, and 41 were disability claims.

For death and disability claims combined, the average processing time to receive the basic required documents was 116 days, or about 16 ½ weeks. Death claims averaged about 118 days, or 17 weeks, and disability claims averaged about 105 days, or 15 weeks.

#### **Performance Measure II**

##### **Average time to determine a claim.**

Performance Measure II is the number of calendar days between when all basic required documents are received by the PSOB Office and when the final determination is made on the case.

The data set for this Performance Measure was the 123 FY 2013 death and disability claims on which outreach was completed and on which determinations were subsequently reached through May 1, 2014. Of these 123 claims, 99 were death claims and 24 were disability claims.

For death and disability claims combined, the average processing time was about 138 days, or about 20 weeks. For death claims only (99 claims), the average processing time was about 127 days, or 18 weeks. For disability claims (24), the average processing time was about 186 days, or 26 ½ weeks.

Of the 123 death and disability claims noted above, 86 out of 99 death claims were approved at the PSOB Office level (86.9 percent approval rate), and 14 out of 24 disability claims were approved at the PSOB Office level (58.3 percent approval rate).