



## **NVFC Tips on Applying for Hometown Heroes Public Safety Officers' Benefits**

The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) has developed a checklist to assist public safety agencies submitting “Hometown Heroes” Public Safety Officers’ Benefits (PSOB) applications. The NVFC, in consultation with BJA, has developed this document, which expands on major issues that the checklist addresses. PSOB is 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. Under the Hometown Heroes Survivors Benefits Act, which was signed into law on December 15, 2003, public safety officer deaths from heart attack or stroke can also be covered.

The checklist addresses common mistakes that agencies make when submitting applications. Whether or not the claims are Hometown Heroes, submitting incomplete or incorrect information can lead to delays in processing applications. BJA requests an extensive amount of information from agencies in order to verify that the public safety officer in question qualifies for PSOB. Whenever requested information does not exist or is unavailable for whatever reason, the agency should make a note of it in the application. Otherwise, BJA will assume that the lack of information was an omission and go back to the agency to request it.

Under Hometown Heroes, a public safety officer that dies from heart attack or stroke within 24 hours of participating in “nonroutine stressful or strenuous physical” activity while on-duty qualifies for PSOB. BJA depends heavily on information gathered from the submitting agency to determine whether or not the physical activity was nonroutine stressful or strenuous. Agencies should not assume that an activity will be considered nonroutine stressful or strenuous and should be as detailed as possible in describing the incident to ensure that BJA understands why the incident constituted nonroutine stressful or strenuous physical activity.

For Hometown Heroes cases, BJA requests information regarding the activities of the public safety officer for the entire 24 hour period prior to the heart attack or stroke. This does not mean that the agency must note every action of the officer during that time period. The agency should report what they know of the officer’s activities. Even if the heart attack or stroke occurred while the officer was engaged in nonroutine stressful or

strenuous physical activity, BJA requests that the agency account for the officer's activities over the previous 24 hours.

BJA requests records from the previous 10 years of an officer's medical history. This is not a requirement. An agency should supply whatever medical records they are able to collect and indicate on the application that additional records are not available.

Agencies and survivors should not hesitate to contact BJA directly if they have any questions. It is also a good idea to follow up with the BJA after submitting information to make sure that it was received. The BJA Benefits Office can be reached at:

Benefits Office  
Bureau of Justice Assistance  
810 Seventh Street NW  
Washington, DC 20531  
202-307-0635  
Toll free: 1-888-SIGNAL13 (744-6513)  
Fax: 202-616-0314  
E-mail: [AskPSOB@usdoj.gov](mailto:AskPSOB@usdoj.gov)

Applicants are also welcome to contact the NVFC if they have any questions about this document or PSOB or Hometown Heroes in general. The NVFC is happy to assist applicants in any way that we can. Contact:

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National Volunteer Fire Council  
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