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.

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/.