



**Available Benefits for the
Surviving Families of
Certain Fallen First Responders**

Benefits deemed current as of 88th Texas Regular Legislative Session, 2023

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ENTITLEMENTS

Burial with Uniform

If a Texas law enforcement officer dies and is to be buried in uniform, the employing governmental entity shall provide the uniform at no cost. Contact your agency. (See government code Sec. 615.103)

Duty Weapon and Badge

On the death of a Texas law enforcement officer, the employing governmental entity shall provide, at no cost, the deceased individual's duty weapon, if any, and badge to the individual designated beneficiary or the estate if the individual did not designate a beneficiary. Contact your agency. (See government code Sec. 615.102)

Health Benefits

The surviving spouse and surviving dependents of Texas law enforcement officers who have died in the line of duty are entitled to purchase continued health insurance benefits at the rate current employees pay (ref. SB872/2009). The surviving spouse is entitled to continue to buy health insurance coverage until the surviving spouse becomes eligible for federal Medicare benefits. The surviving spouse will assume the employee's rate.

Surviving dependent minor children are entitled to continue health insurance coverage until the dependent reaches the age of 18 years or becomes eligible for group health insurance through another employer or as determined by the employer for minor child health benefits.

Surviving dependents who are not minor children are entitled to continue health insurance coverage until the dependent becomes eligible for group health insurance through another employer or when the dependent becomes eligible for federal Medicare benefits.

Survivors may elect to continue coverage at any level of benefits currently offered by the employing entity to dependents of an active employee. Eligible survivors entitled to continued coverage are entitled to purchase the coverage at the group rate for the coverage at the time of payment.

Health, dental, and vision benefits are available for an eligible surviving spouse and surviving children up to age 26 if the deceased was a Commissioned Peace Officer or was employed by Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

Contact the Benefits Assistance Officer at your agency to continue group health insurance coverage.

Property Tax Exemption for Surviving Spouses

Summary: An exemption from ad valorem taxation of the residence homestead of the surviving spouse of a first responder who dies or is fatally injured in the line of duty. Contact your local tax office for further questions.

References: 85th R Legislative Session

Use Form 50-114 – Residence Homestead Exemption Application Website:

<https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/85R/billtext/pdf/SB00015F.pdf#navpanes=0>

FUNERAL BENEFITS

State-Paid Funeral Expenses if the deceased was a Commissioned Peace Officer, Jailer, County Jailer, or Corrections Officer or was employed by T.D.C.J. (Texas Government Code Section 615.12(1) and 615.122.

Workers' Compensation Benefits may be available up to \$6000 for burial expenses and are paid to the person who paid for the expense. For further information, see the Workers' Compensation section to follow.

Texas Crime Victims' Compensation Program reimburses funeral costs, such as professional services, and burial expenses, such as flowers, caskets, urns, grave markers, and transportation of the deceased over 50 miles. Compensation for funeral and burial costs is limited to \$6500 for crimes committed after July 14, 2016. For crimes committed before this date, other limits will apply.

Please visit

<https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/crime-victims/crime-victims-compensation-program/costs-covered-crime-victims-compensation-program>.

Dignity Memorial Funeral, Cremation, and Cemetery providers created the Public Servants Program for emergency service personnel. This program provides dignified and honorable tributes, at no cost, for career and volunteer law enforcement officers who fall in the line of duty. Visit their website for complete information at www.dignitymemorial.com/; navigate to Public Servants for details. You may also contact them by phone at 800-344-6489.

Wilbert Funeral Services, Inc. provides complimentary burial vaults and related services for fallen law enforcement officers. For more information, visit www.wilbert.com or call 888-Wilbert.

Doric Vaults will provide a burial vault free of charge to law enforcement, firefighters, and emergency medical personnel who make the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. For more information, visit www.doric-vaults.com.

FEDERAL & STATE MEMORIAL MONUMENT SUBMISSION

Texas Peace Officers' Memorial

Upon confirmation of a LODD by agency leadership, a Texas Peace Officers' Memorial Officer Nomination Form may be located and submitted at the memorial website at www.texaspeaceofficersmemorial.org under the Report a LODD tab. The form can also be found at www.tcole.texas.gov; navigate to "Who We Are" and find the Texas Peace Officers' Memorial in the window. The affected agency or surviving family should complete and submit this document to recognitions@tcole.gov before December 31.

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National Law Enforcement Officers' Memorial Fund

Upon confirmation of a LODD by agency leadership, an Officer Data Form can be located at www.nleomf.org. Navigate to Submit a Fallen Officer. Select and complete an application: Fallen Officer – Application (agency) or Survivor Notification – Application (family). Collect and submit the required documents before the deadline.

FEDERAL LODD & SUICIDE BENEFITS

Public Safety Officers Benefits (P.S.O.B.) currently provides \$422,035.00 for eligible deaths and disabilities occurring on or after October 1, 2022, to survivors of fallen law enforcement officers, firefighters, and other first responders, and disability benefits to officers catastrophically injured in the line of duty. If the year of your officer's death is before 2022, please go to <https://bja.ojp.gov/program/psob/resources/benefits-by-year> to find the benefit amount related to your public safety officer's end-of-watch.

The Public Safety Officer Support Act 2022 is the latest amendment to the P.S.O.B. Act. It includes "personal injury sustained in the line of duty," Post-Traumatic Stress P.T.S.D., Acute Stress Disorder (A.S.D.), and Trauma and Stress-related Disorders (T/SD) where exposure to specific traumatic events while on duty is a substantial factor allowing for payment of death and disability benefits under certain circumstances. Qualifications require that the public safety officer, while on duty, dies by suicide or is totally or permanently disabled as a result of/or an attempt to die by suicide following exposure to a specific traumatic event.

As of October 2017, Survivors and affected Agencies can complete and submit all PSOB/PSOSA applications via the online claims portal. If you are filing a new application, visit <https://bja.ojp.gov/program/psob/benefits> or view a how-to video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nxvZuT4Nb4Q> on how to file for P.S.O.B. Benefits. If you are following up on a claim filed before October 2017, please contact the P.S.O.B. Office at AskPSOB@usdoj.gov or call 888-744-6513 for information on how to access your claim.

The online claim process has two parts (A & B), which require the agency and family to complete their respective portions. If you need further assistance filing the claim, please contact your local Chapter President or the C.O.P.S. office at 573-346-4911 or email cops@nationalcops.org. The office of the Bureau of Justice Assistance is honored to review hundreds of claims submitted yearly on behalf of America's fallen and catastrophically disabled public safety heroes and their loved ones.

The United States Social Security Administration provides one-time death benefit payment for funeral expenses plus monthly death benefits to the spouse and surviving eligible children. Visit your local S.S.A. office or go to www.ssa.gov to find your local office.

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STATE BENEFITS

The State Legislature enacted **Chapter 615—State Death Benefit**. This Texas Government Code provides guidance for death benefits and entitlements to eligible survivors of certain law enforcement officers, firefighters, and others who have died in the line of duty. The State funds the program, which is administered by the Employees Retirement System (E.R.S.). Please note that it is NOT part of the state retirement program.

For deaths occurring on or after September 1, 2015, the State shall pay \$500,000 to the eligible surviving spouse. If there is no spouse, this amount will be divided equally among surviving children. If there is no eligible surviving spouse or children, the benefit will be paid equally to surviving parents. For more information, contact your regional Chapter of Concerns of Police Survivors.

Workers' Compensation provides death benefits, which are typically 75% of the deceased employee's average weekly wage. Workers' Compensation Benefits are lifetime benefits paid to the surviving spouse, regardless of marital status, and to children until they reach adulthood. Some policies may differ. The beneficiary must submit a D.W.C. Form-042, Beneficiary Claim for Death Benefits, to the Dept of Workers' Compensation within one year of the employee's death.

Workers' Compensation coverage is elective for employers in Texas. For more information, call the Texas Dept of Insurance at 800-252-7031, choose option 1, or visit <https://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/employee/deathben.html>.

The **Texas Crime Victims Compensation Program** provides a varied selection of benefits based on each situation. Those categories are summarized below. Compensation may be available for Loss of Earnings and travel to attend a funeral. Loss of earnings is based on verification of your net salary at the time of the crime.

Loss of earnings may be paid to a claimant who misses work for:

- Bereavement leave taken in connection with a victim's death
- Attending mental health care appointments or victim's medical appointments
- Participation in criminal justice proceedings
- A crime-related disability period
- Attending medical or mental health care appointments
- Participation in criminal justice proceedings

Compensation for loss of support covers income or financial support provided by either the victim or offender at the time of the crime that is no longer available because of the crime.

Reimbursement for Crime-Related Travel costs such as:

- Travel over 20 miles one-way to medical and mental health care appointments, criminal justice proceedings, or a victim's funeral
- Food/lodging for travel over 60 miles (one-way)

Mental health services provided by a:

- Psychiatrist or other Medical Doctor (MD)
- Clinical Psychologist
- Clinical Nurse Specialist (C.N.S.)

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- Licensed Clinical Social Worker (L.C.S.W.)
- Licensed Professional Counselor (L.P.C.)
- Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (L.M.F.T.)

You should use your insurance plan and providers in your insurance network. Contact your case manager for more information if you need to use a different mental health care provider.

Treatment must be necessary, reasonable, and directly related to the crime injury.

Crime Victim's Compensation Program may provide financial assistance of up to \$50,000 to victims of violent crime for related expenses that cannot be reimbursed by insurance or other sources.

State law requires that reimbursement first be sought from other sources, such as health insurance, Medicaid, Medicare, auto insurance, or Texas Worker's Compensation. CVC program staff assists applicants in coordinating the use of all available resources.

To contact and find applicable Instructions, contact your local law enforcement agency's Crime Victim Liaison or your prosecutor's Victim Assistance Coordinator. You can also email crimevictims@texasattorneygeneral.gov or call (800) 983-9933 or (512) 936-1200 (in Austin).

Pension and Retirement Benefits

Law Enforcement agencies in the biggest cities, such as Houston or Dallas, often have their own municipal retirement systems. All the different police pension systems offer death benefits and generally differentiate between on-duty and off-duty deaths. Contact your agency's Benefits Assistance Officer for specific information.

Example of Providers:	Texas Municipal Retirement System
	Houston Police Officers' Pension Fund
	Austin Police Retirement System
	Employee Retirement System of Texas

MENTAL HEALTH & OTHER BENEFITS

Concerns of Police Survivors (C.O.P.S.) is a national, nonprofit, peer support organization that works with law enforcement agencies, police organizations, mental health professionals, and local peer support organizations to provide assistance to surviving families of law enforcement officers who have died in the line of duty. C.O.P.S. provides Hands-On Programs, training for law enforcement, National Police Week registration/accommodations, scholarships, counseling, and so much more to surviving families and co-workers. For complete information, visit www.concernsofpolicesurvivors.org, email cops@nationalcops.org, or call 573-346-4911. Office hours are Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 5 p.m. C.S.T.

Survivors of Blue Suicide Foundation, Inc. (S.B.S.) is a national, nonprofit organization modeled after C.O.P.S., brings the services offered by C.O.P.S. to the law enforcement suicide survivors by providing Survivor Weekend Retreats and a peer support network to survivors. Alongside a committee of survivors, S.B.S. was made possible through the generous donations made by the C.O.P.S. National Board, Past Leadership, and Law Enforcement United (LEU). For complete information, visit <https://www.survivorsofbluesuicide.org/>; email shelley.jones@nationalsbs.org or call 573-808-1404.

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Combined Law Enforcement Association of Texas (C.L.E.A.T.) provides a \$15,000 line of duty death benefit if the officer is a member in good standing at the time of death. Contact CLEAT at 800-252-8153.

Texas Municipal Police Association (T.M.P.A.) – The Voice of Texas Law Enforcement provides a \$15,000 line-of-duty death benefit for members in good standing at the time of death. Contact T.M.P.A. at 800-848-2088.

Texas Fallen Officer Foundation (F.O.F.) is a nonprofit organization that provides aid and assistance to officers and the families of police and other law enforcement officers who have died or been critically injured in the line of duty throughout Texas. You can contact F.O.F. at www.texasfof.org.

Fleetwood Memorial Foundation's purpose is to provide virtually instant no-strings-attached grants of \$10,000 to certified Texas Law Enforcement or Fire Protection Personnel who are injured in their duties or to the families of such personnel who are killed in the performance of their duties. Contact the Fleetwood Memorial Fund website at www.northtexascf.org to download the application. Submit the applications to the attention of Susan Van Meter, North Texas Community Foundation, 777 Main Street, Suite 2850, Fort Worth, Texas 76102.

National Rifle Association Line of Duty Death Benefit provides \$35,000 paid to the survivor of an active N.R.A. Member, a public law enforcement officer who has died in the line of duty. Coverage is automatic for members. Contact the National Rifle Association (N.R.A.) website at www.le.nra.org or (800) 672-3888.

The Correctional Peace Officers' Foundation (C.P.O.F.) is a national, nonprofit charitable organization created in 1984. Its primary function is to preserve and support the surviving families of Correctional Officers who lose their lives in pursuit of their chosen profession of protecting the public from those remanded to correctional custody and supervision in the nation's prisons and jails. Contact C.P.O.F. at www.cpodf.org or call 800-800-CPOF for more information.

The 100 Clubs of Texas are spread throughout the State, including Houston and 32 surrounding counties and San Antonio, Central Texas, El Paso, Denton, and Corpus Christi. The line of duty death must meet specific criteria. An official letter from the Head of Agency must be submitted. Contact your department to see if there is a club in your area and if there are benefits available in your area.

Woodmen of the World 1st Responders Benefit provides a \$10,000 fraternal death benefit if a qualified member is killed while performing their duties as a non-military first responder. To be eligible for this benefit, an individual must be a good-standing benefit member. First Responders include firefighters, E.M.T./paramedics, police, or a person performing a supporting role to such individuals. Contact them at www.woodmenlife.org or call 402-661-8322 for more information.

The Stephen Siller Tunnel to Towers Foundation is committed to ensuring we never forget the events of 9/11/2001 and the sacrifices that were made and continue to be made by our first responders in the line of duty. Through the Fallen First Responder Home Program, Tunnel to Towers aims to pay off the mortgages of fallen law enforcement officers and firefighters who

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have died in the line of duty, leaving behind young children. The Foundation's goal is to ensure stability and security for these families facing sudden, tragic loss. For more information, visit www.tunnel2towers.org.

The Fraternal Order of Eagles provides financial assistance to the surviving children of full-time law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty who were also members of the Fraternal Order of Eagles at the time of their death. For more information, call 614-883-2200 or visit www.foe.com.

The First Responders Children's Foundation provides financial support to children who lost a parent in the line of duty and families enduring significant hardships due to tragic circumstances. They also provide annual educational scholarships to children of fallen heroes. For more information, call 646-822-4236 or visit www.1strcf.org.

The American Police Hall of Fame offers compassionate programs for law enforcement families, yearly birthday and holiday gifts for children, scholarships, summer camp funds, and so much more. Contact them at www.aphf.org.

EDUCATION ASSISTANCE

The Public Safety Officers' Education Assistance (P.S.O.E.A.) provides financial assistance for the purpose of seeking higher education to the spouses and eligible children of local law enforcement, fire, and emergency public safety officers who have been permanently disabled or have died in the line of duty. Education assistance through the P.S.O.E.A. program is available after the Public Safety Officers' Benefit (P.S.O.B.) death or disability claim process has been completed and benefits have been awarded. Visit www.psob.bja.ojp.gov or call 888-744-6513 for more information and to receive an application. Toll-Free (888) 744-6513 Website: <https://www.psob.gov/> Email: AskPSOB@usdoj.gov.

The Texas Education Benefits Program provides Benefits For Certain Survivors:

(a) A person is eligible to receive education benefits under this section if the person is (1) a surviving spouse or (2) a surviving minor child as defined by Section 615.001, Government Code.

(b) An eligible person who enrolls as a full-time student at an institution of higher education as defined by Section 61.003 (public/state-funded) is exempt from tuition and fees at that institution of higher education until the student receives a bachelor's degree or 200 hours of course credit, whichever occurs first.

(c) If the student elects to reside in housing provided by the institution of higher education and qualifies to reside in that housing, the institution shall pay from the general revenue appropriated to the institution the cost of the student's contract for food and housing until the student receives a bachelor's degree or 200 hours of course credit, whichever occurs first. In the case where there is no space available in the institution's housing, the institution shall, from the general revenue appropriated to the institution, pay the student each month the equivalent amount that the institution would have expended had the student lived in the institution's housing.

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(d) The institution of higher education shall, from the general revenue appropriated to the institution, pay to the student the cost of the student's textbooks until the student receives a bachelor's degree or 200 hours of course credit, whichever occurs first.

(e) A payment under this section is in addition to any payment made under Section 615.022, Government Code.

****Amended Government Code 615.0225:** Education benefits are expanded for line-of-duty deaths that occur on or after September 1, 2000. Eligible survivors include surviving children who were claimed as dependents on the income tax return filed with the I.R.S. by the deceased officer in the year preceding the year of death. Survivors must be enrolled as full-time students to be eligible. For more information, contact the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board at 512-427-6101 or visit www.highered.texas.gov/.

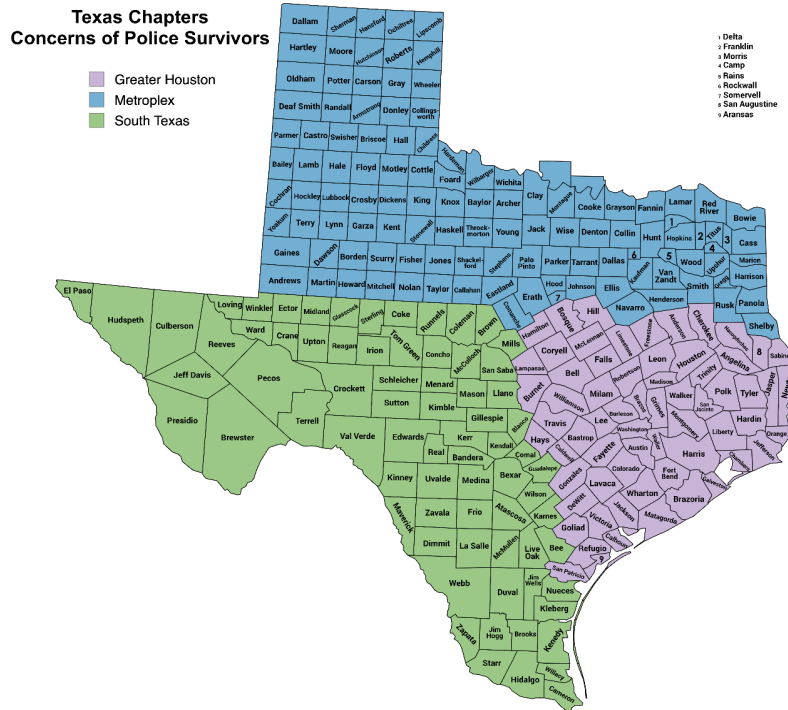
Concerns of Police Survivors (C.O.P.S.) provides financial assistance of up to \$1,500 per semester to surviving children and surviving spouses of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty, according to C.O.P.S. criteria, who wish to pursue a course of study beyond high school. Since there is a tuition-free education benefit available in your State, you must first apply for and be denied by the State or the institution to be eligible for the C.O.P.S. scholarship. How to Apply: <https://www.concernsofpolicesurvivors.org/scholarship>.

The Knights of Columbus Education Scholarship is available to children of members of the Order, children of members in good standing who are full-time law enforcement officers, or full-time firefighters who, while in the lawful performance of their duties, are killed in the line of duty as a result of criminal violence directed at them. Applications must be filed within two years of the member's death or (for service members) disability. For more information, visit www.kofc.org or call 203-752-4332.

If you have questions about any of these benefits or Texas Line of Duty Deaths, please contact your C.O.P.S. Chapter Leadership.

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Texas Chapters of C.O.P.S.



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