STATE DEATH BENEFITS

The Texas Legislature enacted Chapter 615 of the Texas Government Code to provide death benefits for eligible survivors of certain law enforcement officers, fire fighters, and others killed in the line of duty. The program is funded by the state and is administered by the Employees Retirement System of Texas (ERS). It is not part of any 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 are no eligible surviving spouse or children, the benefit will be paid in equal shares to surviving parents.

For more information, call (877) 275-4377 or visit https://www.ers.texas.gov/.

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 individuals designated beneficiary or to the estate if the individual did not designate a beneficiary.

EDUCATION BENEFITS

Texas Educ. Code § 54.354
Current with legislation from the 2019 Regular Session effective as of September 1, 2019

Section 54.354 - Education 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 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. If there is no space available in the institution’s housing, the institution shall, from the general revenue appropriated to the institution, pay to the student each month the equivalent amount that the institution would have expended had the student lived in the institution’s housing. The institution is not required to pay the student the monthly payment if the student would not qualify to live in the institution’s housing.
(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. A payment under this section is in addition to any payment made under Section 615.022, Government Code.

For more information, contact the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board at (512) 427-6101 or visit http://www.highered.texas.gov/.

Texas Government Code 615.0225
For line-of-duty deaths that occur on or after September 1, 2000, education benefits are expanded. Eligible survivors include a surviving spouse as well as surviving children provided the children were claimed as dependents on the income tax return filed with the IRS by the deceased officer in the year preceding the year of death. Survivors must be enrolled as full-time students to be eligible.

Eligible survivors are exempt from tuition and fees until receipt of a bachelor's degree or 200 hours of course credit, whichever occurs first. Additionally, if the student elects to reside in housing provided by the institution of higher education and qualifies to reside in that housing, the student will be exempt from charges for food and housing. If no school housing is available, the student will be paid the equivalent amount for food and housing. The student shall also be reimbursed the cost of textbooks.

If applying through this code, send information directly to the school.

CONCERNS OF POLICE SURVIVORS – 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 PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS’ EDUCATION ASSISTANCE (PSOEA) Program provides financial assistance, for the purpose of seeking higher education, to the spouses and eligible children of local police, fire, and emergency public safety officers who have been killed or permanently disabled in the line of duty. Educational assistance through the PSOEA Program is available after the Public Safety Officers' Benefit (PSOB) death or disability claim process has been completed and benefits have been awarded.

Visit https://psob.bja.ojp.gov/ for more information and the application or call the PSOB Office toll-free at 1-888-744-6513 to discuss the requirements for receiving PSOEA benefits.
**WORKERS’ COMPENSATION**

**Workers’ Compensation** – helps families replace some of the money lost when an employee dies because of a work-related injury or illness. To file a claim, a beneficiary must submit a DWC Form-042, Beneficiary Claim for Death Benefits to DWC within one year of the employee’s death.

Workers’ Compensation coverage is elective for employers in Texas. For more information call the Texas Department of insurance at (800) 252-7031, option 1 or visit https://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/employee/deathben.html.

**PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS’ BENEFITS (PSOB) PROGRAM**

A unique effort of the 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 claim has two parts (A&B) that require the agency and family to fill out online. Visit https://psob.bja.ojp.gov/ for additional filing information. If you need assistance filing this claim, contact the National C.O.P.S. office at (573) 346-4911 or email cops@nationalcops.org

**STATE LIFE INSURANCE - RETIREMENT**

Check with your agency to see if you are eligible for State Life Insurance or death benefits from a Retirement system. You can also visit the retirement system below:

- Texas Municipal Retirement System (TMRS) https://www.tmrs.com/
- Houston Police Officers’ Pension Fund (HPOPS) https://www.hpops.org/
- Austin Police Retirement System (AUSPRS) https://www.ausprs.org/
- Employees Retirement System of Texas (ERS) https://ers.texas.gov/

**HEALTH BENEFITS**

Health, dental, and/or vision benefits for an eligible surviving spouse and surviving children, up to age 26, if the deceased was a Commissioned Peace Officer or was employed by TDCJ.

The surviving spouse and surviving dependents of Texas law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty are entitled to purchase continued health insurance benefits at the rate paid by current employees (ref. Texas SB872/2009). The surviving spouse is entitled to continue to purchase health insurance coverage until the earlier of the date the surviving spouse becomes eligible for federal Medicare benefits.

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.

Surviving dependents who are not minor children are entitled to continue health insurance coverage until the earlier of the date the dependent becomes eligible for group health insurance through another employer; or the date 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 who are entitled to continued coverage are entitled to purchase the coverage at the group rate for that coverage that exists at the time of payment.

Check with your agencies Human Resources Department for available health benefit information.

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**FUNERAL BENEFITS**

**State-Paid Funeral Expenses** if the deceased was a Commissioned Peace Officer; jailer, county jailer or guard; or was employed by TDCJ (Texas Government Code Section 615.12(1) and 615.122). See State Benefits section above for contact information.

**Workers’ Compensation** Benefits up to $6,000 may be available for burial expenses and are paid to the person who paid for expense. See Workers’ Compensation section above.

**TEXAS CRIME VICTIMS’ COMPENSATION PROGRAM** Reimbursement for funeral costs such as professional services for funeral and burial services, flowers, caskets, urns, and grave markers, Transportation of deceased over 50 miles Compensation for funeral and burial costs is limited to $6,500 for dates of crime after July 14, 2016. For dates of crime before this, other limits will apply. Compensation may be available for loss of earnings and travel to attend the funeral. For more information, visit [https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/crime-victims/crime-victims-compensation-program/funeral-cost-reimbursement](https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/crime-victims/crime-victims-compensation-program/funeral-cost-reimbursement) or call (800)983-9933

**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 [https://www.dignitymemorial.com/](https://www.dignitymemorial.com/) and look under Public Servants for details. You may also call 800-344-6489 and speak with a representative.

**WILBERT FUNERAL SERVICES, INC.** provides complimentary burial vaults and related services for fallen law enforcement officers. For more information visit [https://www.wilbert.com/](https://www.wilbert.com/) or call (888) WILBERT.

**DORIC VAULTS** In recognition of Law Enforcement, Firefighters and Emergency Medical Technician personnel who make the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty, the Doric Family will provide a burial vault free of charge. For more information, visit [http://doric-vaults.com/](http://doric-vaults.com/).
ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

PEER SUPPORT ORGANIZATION
CONCERNS OF POLICE SURVIVORS INC., (C.O.P.S.), is a national, non-profit 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 concernsofpolicesurvivors.org; email cops@nationalcops.org or call (573) 346-4911. Office hours are Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. CST.

SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFIT
Spouses, children, or parents may be eligible for Social Security Benefits. To apply for benefits, call (800) 772-1213 to speak to a Social Security representative or visit your local Social Security Office. You cannot report a death or apply for survivors benefits online. Visit https://www.ssa.gov/benefits/survivors/ifyou.html#h6 for more information.

TEXAS CRIME VICTIMS’ COMPENSATION PROGRAM May provide financial assistance up to $50,000 to victims of violent crime for related expenses that cannot be reimbursed by insurance or other sources. Visit https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/crime-victims/crime-victims-compensation-program or call (800) 983-9933 for more information.


Fleetwood Memorial Foundation’s purpose is to provide immediate financial assistance to Certified Texas Law Enforcement or Fire Protection Personnel who are injured in the performance of their duties or to the families of such personnel who are killed in the performance of their duties. The Fleetwood Memorial Foundation Fund became part of the North Texas Community Foundation November 1, 2012. Call (817) 877-0702 or visit http://fleetwoodmemorial.org/ for more information.

Combine Law Enforcement Association of Texas (CLEAT) $15,000 line of duty death benefit if the officer is a member in good standing at time of death. Contact them at 1-800-252-8153.

TMPA - The Voice of Texas Law Enforcement $10,000 line of duty death benefit for members in good standing. Ph. 1-800-848-2088

Texas Fallen Officer Foundation (FOF)- The Texas Fallen Officer Foundation is a nonprofit organization that will provide aid and assistance to officers and the families of police and other law enforcement officers killed or critically injured in the line-of-duty throughout the State of Texas. https://www.texasfof.org/
The Correctional Peace Officers (CPO) Foundation is a national, non-profit 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. Visit http://cpofo.org/ or call (800) 800-CPOF for more information.

100 CLUBS OF TEXAS-Many Clubs are spread throughout Texas. Houston and the 32 surrounding counties as well as San Antonio, Central Texas, El Paso, Denton and Corpus Christi. Line of duty death must meet specific criteria. An official letter from the Chief or Constable on official letterhead must be submitted. Contact your department to see if there is a club in your area as well as possible available benefits in your area.

FRATERNAL ORDER OF EAGLES - Through their Memorial Foundation, the Eagles provide financial assistance for surviving children of full-time law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty who were also active members of the Fraternal Order of Eagles at the time of their death. For more information, call (614) 883-2200 or visit https://www.foe.com/.

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. https://www.aphf.org/

First Responders Children’s Foundation provides financial support to children who have lost a parent in the line of duty as well as families enduring significant financial hardships due to tragic circumstances. They also provide annual education scholarships to children of fallen heroes. For more information, call (646) 822-4236 or visit https://1strcf.org.

Homestead Exemption The surviving spouse of a first responder killed in the line of duty is eligible for a 100% property tax exemption on a residence homestead if they have not remarried. To apply, individuals must submit an application, documentation that the spouse was killed in the line of duty, and a copy of your marriage license. The application and directions can be found on the Texas Comptroller website https://comptroller.texas.gov/taxes/property-tax/exemptions/.

OTHER BENEFITS TO ASK YOUR AGENCY ABOUT:
City life insurance?
Private life insurance?
County & Local Jurisdiction Benefits?