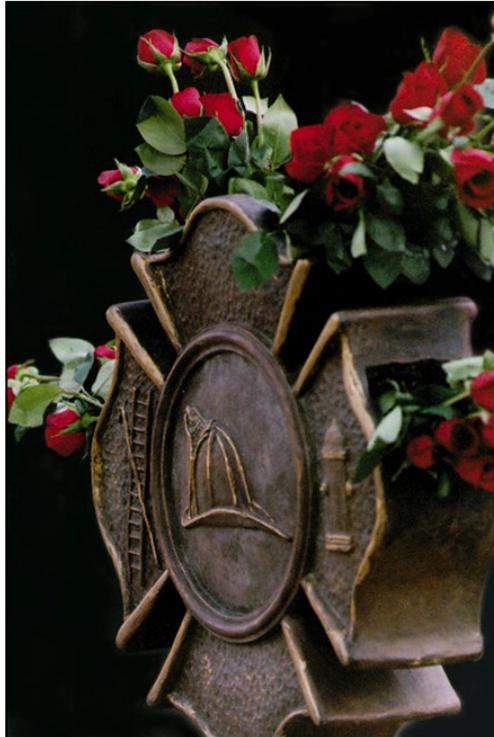


Taking Care of Our Own[®]:

*A Guide to Preparing
For a Line-of-Duty Death*



BJA
Bureau of Justice Assistance
U.S. Department of Justice



Dear Training Participant:

Welcome to *Taking Care of Our Own*[®]. The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation is proud to have you participate in this training session. Thanks to the Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance, we have developed this program to help senior fire officials prepare for the worst – a line-of-duty death.

For several years, the Foundation has provided immediate and continuing support to the families of fallen firefighters. Many families have encouraged us to expand our outreach to include fire service personnel. They feel everything that happens after a firefighter's death affects how families and departments heal from their loss.

To establish specific needs for the fire department programs, we conducted a series of focus group meetings with chiefs who had lost firefighters in the line of duty. Chiefs of career, volunteer, and combined fire departments from across the country participated.

Chiefs talked about what they learned from the experience, and what they wished they had known and had in place before the incident occurred. The chiefs said they wanted to help the families of their fallen firefighters. However, many talked about not knowing what to say to the family or how to provide an appropriate level of support. We also met with families of fallen firefighters, asking them to identify what departments did that most helped them through the difficult times.

Chiefs and family members gave us a wealth of information that we have used to develop today's training program. There are many more issues that time prevents us from covering. We have included some detailed materials in the Appendices for your review after the class. We hope you will share your comments with us, so we can make this a valuable resource for others. You will also receive information about other important programs for fire officers experiencing a line of duty death. The Foundation has revised the Chief-to-Chief Network and created Incident Commander-to Incident Commander and Company Officer-to-Company Officer programs. Each of these initiatives provides immediate assistance when it is most needed.

Thank you for sharing your time today.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ronald Jon Siarnicki". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue horizontal line.

Chief Ronald Jon Siarnicki
Executive Director

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Taking Care of Our Own® – Introduction

Taking Care of Our Own® is a course sponsored by the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation with funding support from the United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance. This firefighter training is designed to help you better understand and support the needs of both family and fire service survivors after a line-of-duty death and to learn how to create a plan for your fire department in case of such an event. Everything that happens after a fatality impacts the recovery of the family members, fire department/agency members and the greater community. Having a well-constructed plan in place will assure that every step of this difficult journey – from death notification to the funeral and into the future – will be accomplished compassionately and professionally.

The firefighter training begins by outlining a planning process to organize how your fire department will handle notification and assistance in the event of an LODD. Then, the module provides guidance on the composition of the notification team and on how to talk with the family members during the notification. In preparation for understanding how to support both the family and the fire department through the difficult period after an LODD, the module explains the bereavement process. Following that the module covers best practices for assisting the family and helping fire department members heal after the loss. As part of assisting the family, there is a module explaining survivor benefits.

The aim of this firefighter training module is to help you create the most positive outcome possible following the line-of-duty death of a member of your fire department or agency. When a firefighter dies, their surviving family members are obviously deeply affected by the loss of their loved one. However, the fire chief, other department/agency members, and the great community are also profoundly impacted. Each of these individuals is affected in different way, and as a result will have different emotional, logistical and resource needs. This course will raise your awareness of these differences and educate you as to how best support each affected group through proper pre-incident planning and the development of a comprehensive Line-of-Duty Death Plan.

Taking Care of Our Own® – Class Objectives

At the completion of this training, participants will be able to:

- Understand the need to develop a serious injury and Line-of-Duty Death Plan;
- Understand the importance of maintaining an up-to-date emergency contact information form for reach member of the fire department/agency and retirees;
- Describe the responsibilities of the notification team and basic principles of an effective and compassionate notification;
- Understand the distinctions between grief, mourning and bereavement and to recognize normal grieving patterns;
- Understand the need to coordinate a family support team which may include: a family liaison; public information officer; hospital liaison; and funeral liaison;
- Understand that the family's needs differ from those of the department/agency, and that the family members' wishes must be prioritized;
- Understand the ways that you will need to support the family, your department/agency and the community before, during and after the funeral;
- Understand the federal, state and local benefits that may be available to surviving family members when their loved one dies or suffers a serious injuries in the line of duty;



1

National Fallen Firefighters Foundation

- Created by U.S. Congress in 1992
- To honor and remember America's fallen heroes
- To provide necessary resources to assist their survivors in the rebuilding of their lives
- To work within the Fire Service Community to reduce firefighter deaths
- A non-profit 501 (c) 3 corporation in Maryland

On the Web at: www.FireHero.org

2



A total of 4,342 firefighters have died in the line-of-duty from 1981 to 2019.

On average, one firefighter dies in the United States every 78 hours.

On the Web at: www.FireHero.org

3

National Memorial Park



On the Web at: www.FireHero.org





 Be a Hero  Save a Hero

4

National Memorial



The National Fallen Firefighters Memorial

On the Web at: www.FireHero.org





 Be a Hero  Save a Hero

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National Fallen Firefighters Foundation

FIRE SERVICE PROGRAMS

HISTORY

- **Everyone Goes Home**
 - 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives
 - Training programs include Courage to be Safe, LACK, Leadership so Everyone Goes Home
- **Taking Care of Our Own® (TCOOO)**
 - Prepares for Line-of-Duty Death or Serious Injury
 - Pre-incident planning, survivor notification, family and co-worker support and benefits / resources available to families
- **Local Assistance State Team (LAST)**
 - Department and survivor support after LODD occurs
 - May be first survivor contact with NFFF

On the Web at: www.FireHero.org





 Be a Hero  Save a Hero

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National Fallen Firefighters Foundation

FIRE SERVICE PROGRAMS

- **Vulnerability Assessment Project (the 'VAP')**
 - Risk management based on root causes and best practices
- **Fire Service Research Agenda**
 - Establishes the nation's immediate fire service research priorities
- **Fire Hero Learning Network**
 - On line learning network
- **Chief-to-Chief Network**
 - Chief officer peer support after LODD occurs
- **IC to IC Network**
 - Incident Commander peer support after LODD occurs

HISTORY

 On the Web at: www.FireHero.org



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National Fallen Firefighters Foundation

FIRE HERO FAMILY PROGRAMS

- **Fire Hero Family Network**
 - Peer support network
 - Matches families based on family circumstances
 - Participation is voluntary
- **Scholarship Programs**
 - For education and/or job training
 - Spouses, life partners, children, and stepchildren of fallen firefighters are eligible
 - Applications due by March 1st of each year
 - More than \$4 million awarded since 1997
 - Partner with Motorola, MasterGuard and ICMA-RC

HISTORY

 On the Web at: www.FireHero.org



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National Fallen Firefighters Foundation

FIRE HERO FAMILY PROGRAMS

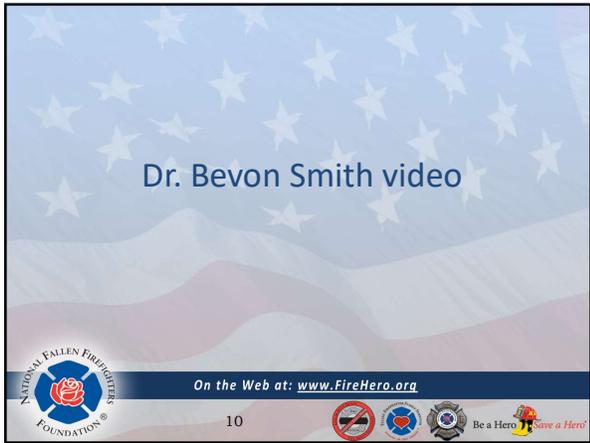
- **Memorial Weekend**
 - Honors individuals who died the previous calendar year
 - Transportation, lodging, meals, small group sessions
- **Annual Fire Hero Family Wellness Conference**
 - Workshops
 - Building resiliency, wellness, life skills, stress management, financial planning, home repair
 - Networking with other Fire Hero Family members
- **Resources**
 - Peer support
 - Counseling, brochures, library, newsletters

HISTORY

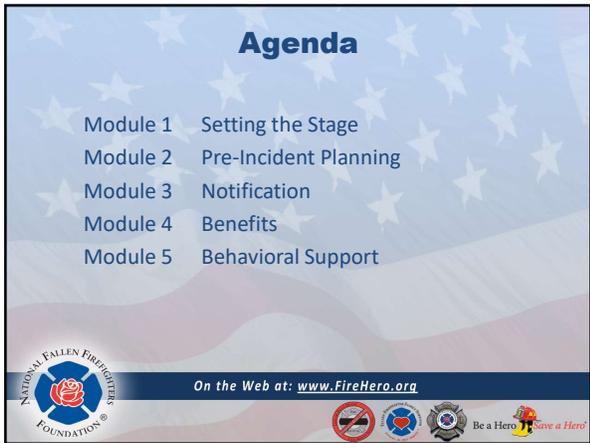
 On the Web at: www.FireHero.org



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Setting the Stage for the Day

- Describe the elements of a department plan
- Distinguish between family and department needs
- Identify ways to help the department and the families

On the Web at: www.FireHero.org



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Taking Care of Our Own®

Self Assessment

(10-minute exercise)

On the Web at: www.FireHero.org



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Part Three: Survivor Benefits

1. Do you know what benefits exist for the firefighter's survivors?
YES NO
2. Do you know what steps the department must take to initiate claims?
YES NO
3. Does the department have a complete written list of benefits?
YES NO
4. Do you know what the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program (PSOB) is?
YES NO
5. Do you know what information you need for the initial PSOB contact?
YES NO

Part Four: Responses to Grief

The list below contains possible responses to grief that you may encounter. Indicate which you think are typical responses and those which may show serious problems. Place either an "OK" or a "NH" ("Needs Help") in the blank.

1. _____ You have just notified a 50-year-old woman that her husband was killed in a structure fire. She begins sobbing and says, "I don't want to live without him! I cannot go on living alone!"
2. _____ It has been a year since a young firefighter was killed. Once a month his mother calls the fire station. She is thankful to the department for all it has done, but whenever someone mentions her son, she bursts into tears.
3. _____ One of your firefighters was severely burned. He struggled for a month, then died of his injuries. After the death, his wife and parents thank you for all you have done, but decline your offer to help with funeral planning or to assist in other ways. They seem calm and are not emotional.
4. _____ Two months after the death of a firefighter, you run into his wife at the mall and ask how she is doing. She says she is okay and that she has a sense that her husband is still nearby. "I see him and we talk," she says.
5. _____ A friend of yours died while responding to a fire. You know her family well and have spent a lot of time with them in the weeks after the death. You notice a change in your friend's father. He seems restless, says he cannot concentrate on anything, and often loses his train of thought.

Part Five: Family Support

How would you handle these actual situations?

1. The family wants to view their loved one's badly burned body at the hospital.
2. The family wants a private service, not a fire service funeral.
3. The widow comes by the station and wants to know why the department doesn't still care.

Part Six: Helping the Family

List two or three ways you can help the family in each of these three situations.

1. At the hospital or morgue...
2. From the time of death through the funeral...
3. Ongoing support...

**Thank you for completing this self-assessment.
We will discuss these issues during the day.**

Taking Care of Our Own®

Fire Chief Presentation



On the Web at: www.FireHero.org



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Taking Care of Our Own®



Pre-Incident Planning – Module 2



On the Web at: www.FireHero.org



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Pre-Incident Planning

- Identify the benefits of having a plan
- Give examples of how to support the families
- List key emergency contact information
- Identify benefits available to survivors



On the Web at: www.FireHero.org



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Employee Emergency Contact Information

- Firefighter's name, address, phone number
- Names and addresses of family/close friends to notify
- Special circumstances
- Selection of department member/others to assist with notification
- Funeral preferences
- Beneficiary Forms
- Sample form



On the Web at: www.FireHero.org



Emergency Contact Information

The information that you provide will be used **ONLY** in the event of your serious injury or death in the line of duty. Please take the time to fill it out fully and accurately because the data will help the department take care of your family and friends.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Last Name	First Name	Middle Name
Home Address		
City	State	Zip
Phone Number		
()		

CONTACT INFORMATION

Family or friends you would like the department to contact. Please list in the order you want them contacted. If needed, provide additional names on the back of this sheet.

NOTE: If the contact is a minor child, please indicate the name of the adult to contact.

Name
Relationship
Home Contact Information
Address:
Phone:
Work Contact Information
Name of Employer:
Address:
Phone:
Pager/Cell phone:
Special Circumstances – such as health conditions or need for an interpreter

Name
Relationship
Home Contact Information
Address:
Phone:
Work Contact Information
Name of Employer:
Address:
Phone:
Pager/Cell phone:
Special Circumstances – such as health conditions or need for an interpreter

List names and dates of birth of all of your children.	
Name:	DOB:
Name:	DOB:
Name:	DOB:

List the department member(s) you would like to accompany a chief fire officer to make the notification.
Name:
Name:

List anyone else you want to help make the notification. (for example, your minister)
Name:
Relationship:
Home Contact Information
Address:
Phone:
Work Contact Information
Name of Employer:
Address:
Phone:
Pager/Cellphone:

OPTIONAL INFORMATION

Make sure someone close to you knows this information.

Religious Preferences
Religion:
Place of Worship:
Address:

Funeral Preferences		
Are you a veteran of the U. S. Armed Services?	yes	no
If you are entitled to a military funeral, do you wish to have one?	yes	no
Do you wish to have a fire service funeral?	yes	no

Please list your membership in fire service, religious, or community organizations that may provide assistance to your family:

Do you have a will?	yes	no
<i>If yes, where is it located or who should be contacted about it? _____</i>		

List all life insurance policies you have:		
<u>Company</u>	<u>Policy Number</u>	<u>Location of Policy</u>
Is all information current? (beneficiary names, contact info, etc. This information may determine who gets Federal benefits.)		

Special Requests
If you are an organ donor, coordination with the medical officials will be necessary. List any requests in this section.

Establishing a Family Support Team

- Team will be responsible for necessary functions before, during and after the funeral
- Team will handle these responsibilities depending on department resources

On the Web at: www.FireHero.org

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Family Liaison

- Liaison selection
 - Close but not too close
 - Good communication skills
- Go between for family and others
- Ensure back ups
- 24 hour contact information

On the Web at: www.FireHero.org

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Working with the Media

Establish guidelines
for working with the media

On the Web at: www.FireHero.org

21

Coordinating with the Hospital

Establish procedures

- Assist the family at the hospital
- Meeting area for the family
- Meeting area for the department members

On the Web at: www.FireHero.org



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Taking Care of Our Own®

Fire Hero Family Presentation

On the Web at: www.FireHero.org



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Taking Care of Our Own®



Notification – Module 3

On the Web at: www.FireHero.org



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Notification

- Recognize importance of having notification procedures
- Understand the key principles of notification
- Know what to say and what not to say
- Implications of Social Media

 On the Web at: www.FireHero.org



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Notification video

 On the Web at: www.FireHero.org

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Basic Principles of Notification

- In person
- In time and with certainty
- In a team
 - Gender, religion, race, ethnicity, etc.
- In plain language (awareness of language barriers)
- With compassion

 On the Web at: www.FireHero.org



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Notification Process

- Survivors
- Departmental members
 - On duty
 - Off duty
 - Retirees
- Key members of the community (elected officials)

 On the Web at: www.FireHero.org



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Activity

How Would You Handle This Kind of Situation?

 On the Web at: www.FireHero.org



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How Would You Handle This Kind of Situation?

Scenario 1

You are assigned to serve as Acting Fire Chief. The Fire Chief is out of the country to attend a conference and vacation in Canada for the next 5 days. At 0123 hrs. on day two of the Chief's absence, you are notified of significant injury involving one of your firefighters. The firefighter stumbled and fell while spotting for an engine that was moving backward during "mop up" at the scene of a house fire. His injuries are life-threatening. During transport to a local hospital the firefighter succumbs to his injuries and dies.

You and the fire department notification team knock on the door of the home of the deceased fire fighter. As soon as his pregnant wife opens the door and sees you, she cries hysterically, screams at, slams the door and yells at you to go away.

Scenario 2

At 0918 hrs. you are attending a meeting of one of your jurisdictions local civic clubs when you are advised via text to contact Emergency Communications. Using your cellphone and stepping outside the meeting room you are made aware of a multiple firefighter injured on the scene of a vehicle collision. Initial reports are that there are no life-threatening injuries for two of the firefighters. However, a third was struck by a vehicle moving at high speed through the incident scene. She has been transported to a local hospital and pronounced dead.

You excuse yourself from the meeting and rush to the hospital arriving at the hospital just 10 minutes ahead of her spouse. Upon his arrival he seeks you out and aggressively demands to know if his wife is okay and what happened?

Scenario 3

At 1004 hrs. you are in route to a meeting with your jurisdictions governing body when you are alerted to the report of a structure fire with civilian and firefighters injured. You listen intently to radio traffic from the incident scene. In a frenzied yet professional tone you hear, "May Day, May Day, May Day we have a firefighter down on the front porch of the house, this is Engine 1, Firefighter Smith is down, we are Fire Attack, and we need the Rapid Intervention Team and the Medics." The next radio transmission indicate Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) is in progress on a downed firefighter. Additional radio traffic indicates the firefighter is being transported to a local hospital. You advised Emergency Communications that you will be headed to hospital.

You arrive at the hospital almost simultaneously with the ambulance. You notice CPR continuing as the stretcher, firefighters, paramedics, and other hospital emergency staff disappear into an Emergency Room. After a short time, you are advised by the Emergency Room Physician that your firefighter has died.

Social media reports and area news outlets are broadcasting Break News accounts of a firefighter severely injured at a fire in the City. Members of his family are beginning to arrive at the hospital.

Scenario 4

A popular member of your department assigned to a highly active fire company has for two consecutive shifts complained to his fellow fire fighters of fever, shortness of breath and body aches. His fellow firefighters have observed his deteriorating condition that also includes a dry cough and shortness of breath. At the end of the shift, he is checked by his personal physician and diagnosed with respiratory distress (COVID-19). His condition continues to deteriorate and shortly after admission to a local hospital he is pronounced dead at 1842 hrs.

You are advised of the firefighter's death by a member of the department by cellphone. Several members of the firefighter's family and members of the fire department are present at the hospital when you arrive. Word of the firefighter's death has started to circulate through social media and other means.

Scenario 5

A member of your combination fire department sustained fatal injuries at a building fire in your community. She is a recently honorably discharged veteran from a nearby military installation. The deceased is single and moved to the area to accept a position with your fire department. Her hometown and place of birth is out of state and about 300 miles from your jurisdiction. As a newly appointed member of your department her Emergency Notification Form is current.

You are advised of her death from the on-scene Incident Commander. Local, regional, and social media are reporting the death of a firefighter. However, there are no details about the fire being reported.

Taking Care of Our Own®



Benefits – Module 4

On the Web at: www.FireHero.org



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Local Assistance State Team

The LAST can assist with most facets of Line Of Duty Deaths:

- Planning
- Funeral assistance
- Honor Guard assistance
- PSOB/Benefit preparations
- Firehero.org for contact info

On the Web at: www.FireHero.org



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Providing Benefit Information to the Family

Establishing and maintaining an up-to-date list of benefits

On the Web at: www.FireHero.org



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<p>Federal Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSOB • COBRA • Social Security • Veterans Benefits • Victims of Crime Act Benefits 	<p>State Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Time Death Benefit • Workers Comp • Funeral Benefit • Retirement/Pension • Education Benefit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Spouse – Children • Health Insurance
---	---

Check out your state benefits:
Benefits.FireHero.org
 On the Web at: www.FireHero.org



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<p>Local Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life Insurance • Retirement / Pension • Secondary Employment • Final Paycheck • Funeral / Burial Allowance • Health Insurance • Gravesites • Assistance with Immediate Expenses 	<p>Private Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education benefits • Union benefits • Hundred Clubs, Heroes, etc • Fraternal organizations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Knights of Columbus – Elks Lodges – Lions Clubs • NFFF Scholarships
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On the Web at: www.FireHero.org



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Financial Benefits Checklist

Consider each of the following benefits to see if families of department members are eligible. Each benefit may have separate criteria for eligibility.

Check out the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation website for general information on federal benefits and a state-by-state listing of state and local benefits. Go to www.firehero.org or call (301)447-1365.

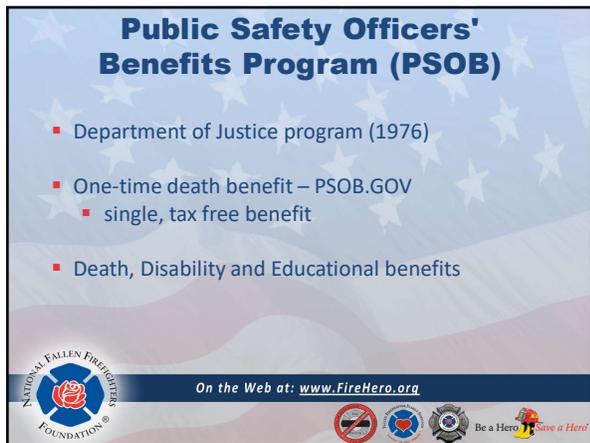
	Eligible?			Have all information?	Claim initiated? Date?	Notes/Actions needed
	Yes	No	Need More Info			
Federal Benefits						
Public Safety Officers' Benefit						
Public Safety Officers' Educational Assistance						
COBRA						
Social Security						
Veterans Benefits						
Victim of Crime Act Benefit						
State Benefits						
One-time death benefit						
Workers Compensation						
Funeral/Burial allowance						
Retirement/Pension plan						
Health Insurance						
Educational benefits for Spouse						
Educational benefits for Children						

	Eligible?			Have all information?	Claim initiated? Date?	Notes/Actions needed
	Yes	No	Need More Info			
Local Benefits						
Life Insurance						
Retirement/Pension plan						
Secondary employment						
Final paycheck						
Funeral/Burial allowance						
Health Insurance						
Gravesites						
Educational benefits for Spouse						
Educational benefits for Children						
Assistance with immediate expenses						
Private Benefits						
Education benefits						
Union benefits						
Hundred Clubs, Heroes, Bluecoats, etc						
Fraternal organizations						
NFFF Scholarships *						Application deadline of March 1

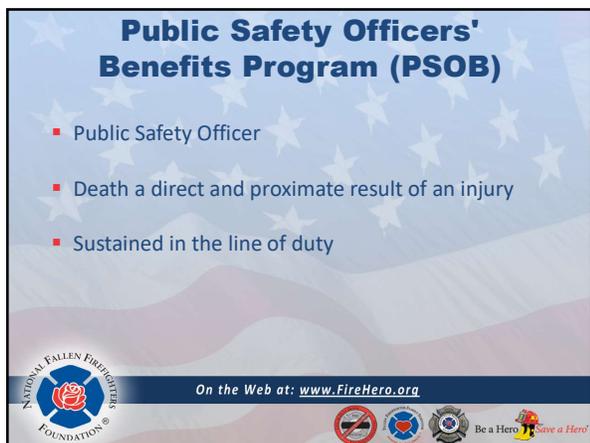
* NFFF Scholarships are for spouse/children/stepchildren of firefighters honored at the NFFF Memorial



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Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program (PSOB)

Hometown Heroes - 2003

If a public safety officer dies from a heart attack or stroke while on duty or within 24 hours, that officer shall be presumed to have died as the direct and proximate result of a personal injury sustained in the line of duty if....

"The officer had been engaged in a non-routine stressful or strenuous physical activity"

On the Web at: www.FireHero.org



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Hierarchy of PSOB Benefit

1. Surviving Spouse
2. Surviving Eligible Children
3. PSOB Beneficiary Designee / Life Insurance Beneficiary
4. Surviving Parents
5. Surviving Children otherwise in-eligible due to age (23 years of age)

On the Web at: www.FireHero.org



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Designation of Beneficiaries Form
For

U.S. Department of Justice Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program

WHO RECEIVES PSOB BENEFITS IF THE CLAIM IS APPROVED?

Benefits are paid to survivors according to the following criteria:

1. If there is a spouse and no child* or children, all to the spouse.
2. If there is a spouse and child* or children, one-half to the spouse and one-half to the child or children in equal shares.
3. If no spouse, and children only, all to the child* or children in equal shares.
4. If no spouse or children, then to the individual(s) designated by the officer as PSOB beneficiary on file with the officer's agency, or if no designation then to the individual designated as the beneficiary on the most recently executed life insurance policy on file with the officer's agency.
5. If none of the above, to the officer's parents in equal shares.
6. If no parents, to the officer's surviving "adult" children in equal shares.

**"Child" is defined as any natural, illegitimate, adopted, or posthumous child or stepchild of a deceased public safety officer who, at the time of the officer's death, is 18 years old or under; 19-22 and a full-time student; or 19 and older, and incapable of self-support due to a physical or mental disability.*

**PURPOSE
OF THIS
FORM**



This form is for use in declaring a beneficiary for any PSOB benefits that your survivors may be eligible for in the event of your death. The circumstances in which the beneficiaries identified here might be eligible for the PSOB benefit are identified in Step 4 above and would not apply if there is an eligible spouse or children. Should you wish to complete this form, it must be retained with official departmental records.

I, _____ (print full name), as a member of
_____ (print agency name), hereby designate the
following beneficiary(s) for any PSOB benefits that may be paid in the event of my death:

Name	Address	Relationship	Percent <i>(must total 100)</i>
-------------	----------------	---------------------	---

Officer signature: _____ Date: ____/____/____

Witness signature: _____ Date: ____/____/____

Taking Care of Our Own®



Behavioral Health – Module 5

On the Web at: www.FireHero.org



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Supporting the Family

- Help to identify symptoms of grief versus traumatic grief and loss
- Describe the unique issues related to a sudden/traumatic death
- Identify signs that someone may need help
- Use peers for support and retirees can be of assistance.

On the Web at: www.FireHero.org



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Grief

- Complex
 - Different for All
- Very Powerful
- Subsides
- Tidal (Back and Forth)
- Shifting Life Perspectives

On the Web at: www.FireHero.org



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The 6 Needs of the Grieving

- Acknowledge Death
- Embrace Pain
- Remember the Individual
- Develop a new Identity
- Search for Meaning
- Receive On-going Support

On the Web at: www.FireHero.org

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Challenges of Sudden Death

1. Leaves survivors with a sense of unreality – “walking around in the fog”
2. Increases feelings of guilt: “If only I had...”
 - What ifs?
 - Unspoken words and untaken actions
3. Intensifies the need to blame
 - you, the agency, God

On the Web at: www.FireHero.org

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Challenges of Sudden Death

4. Involves legal and medical authorities
 - possible on-going investigations
5. Feeling helpless
6. Unfinished business

On the Web at: www.FireHero.org

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Three Patterns of Grief Reactions

- Resilient
 - Most common
- Gradual Recovery
 - 1-2 Years to equilibrium
- Chronic
 - Consider referral to counseling services

On the Web at: www.FireHero.org

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Signs a Survivor May Need Help

- Grief more intense/overwhelming months after the death
- Extreme withdrawal from normal activities/relationships
- Self-destructive thoughts, feelings or actions
- Heavy use of alcohol or drugs
- Frequent nightmares or flashbacks

On the Web at: www.FireHero.org

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What Can You Do To Help?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be Present • Support Them • Comfort • Listen with Empathy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share Positive Memories • Check In Regularly • Invitations to Positive/Fun Events (Not Just Memorials)
--	--

On the Web at: www.FireHero.org

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Reframing Activity

When completing this exercise, remember to put yourself in the position of a family member who has just lost someone close.

Poor Choice	What's Wrong With This Approach?	A Better Choice
<p><u>Scenario 1</u> One week after the firefighter's death you drop by to see the firefighter's widow and her 3 young children. She is trying to sort out paperwork and take care of household chores. As you leave, you say "Just call if you need anything."</p>		
<p><u>Scenario 2</u> You visit the firefighter's parents about a month after the death. Since just the mention of their son's name seems to upset them, you are careful not to talk about the firefighter.</p>		
<p><u>Scenario 3</u> You have just notified the firefighter's fiancée and parents of his death. They seem stunned, and the father says, "What will we do about the funeral?" Wanting to help them out, you say, "You don't have to do a thing. We'll take care of everything."</p>		
<p><u>Scenario 4</u> The firefighter's teenage son has been struggling since his death. To cheer him up you say, "Your father wouldn't want you to be sad. He would want you to be strong and take care of your mom."</p>		
<p><u>Scenario 5</u> You drop by to see the firefighters' widow soon after the funeral. She is visibly upset, and she tells you she does not know how she will go on without her husband. You state "You are young, you will find someone else."</p>		

From Taking Care of the Family, to Taking Care of Our Own®

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First Responders facing mental health epidemic

Firefighter Vernon video

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PAUL COMBS
FIRE ENGINEERING MAGAZINE

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The 9 Warning Signs

- Isolation
- Irritability
- Difficulty Sleeping
- Anger
- Emotional Numbness
- Lack of Communication
- Cynicism, Distrust and Loss of Work Satisfaction
- Depression
- Drinking as a perceived need or a habit

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Absenteeism

- Unauthorized leave
- Excessive sick leave
- Leaving work early
- Peculiar and doubtful excuses for absences

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Depression

- Isolation around quarters or during training
- Changes in sleeping or eating patterns
- Unusual sadness after calls/frustration at outcome
- Unusual anger
- Fatigue/Loss of Energy
- Depressed Mood
- Lack of interest in previously enjoyable activities
- Agitation, restlessness, irritability
- Feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, and/or guilt
- Inability to think, concentrate or indecisiveness on or off duty
- Recurrent thoughts of death, suicidal ideation, attempt or plan for suicide

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Anxiety

- Restlessness or feeling edgy
- Becoming tired easily
- Trouble concentrating
- Feeling as if the mind is going “blank”
- Irritability
- Muscle tension
- Sleep problems

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Burnout

- Exhaustion
- Lack of enthusiasm and motivation
- Feelings of ineffectiveness
- Frustration and cynicism
- Reduced efficacy within the workplace

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Increased Risk of Suicide

- Personal life
- Alcohol or other substances?
- Critical incident or significant disciplinary action
- Job performance suffering?
- Increased medical complaints, miss work frequently?

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PTSD

A. Exposure to Actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence in one or more of the following ways:

1. Directly witnessing the traumatic event
2. Witnessing, in person, the event(s) as it occurred to others
3. Learning that the event occurred to a close family member or friend
4. Experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event.

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PTSD

- B. Intrusion Symptoms
- C. Persistent Avoidance of Symptoms
- D. Negative alterations in cognitions and mood
- E. Marked alterations in arousal and reactivity
- F. Duration of disturbance
- G. Clinically significant distress/impairment
- H. Not attributable to substances or medical condition

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PTSD in First Responders

- Career Prevalence Estimation
 - Suicide Ideation 46.8%
 - Plans 19.2%
 - Attempts 15.5%
 - Non-Suicidal Self Injury 16.4%

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Chronic health issues and injuries

- Potentially Traumatic Event
- Vicarious trauma
- Compassion fatigue
- Repeated Exposure to Trauma (RET)

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Unique professional experiences

- Death notification
- Personal exposure and injury
- When professional colleagues are hurt or killed
- Unique sensory flashbacks
- Depersonalization and derealization can become habitual in the job

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The Calls that Linger

- First and worst calls
- Child related calls and fatalities
- Suicides
- Calls where the professional felt personally threatened
- Calls with intense odors
- Calls involving family and co-workers

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Coordinate with Trusted Support

Trusted organizational and community resources

- Leaders
- Peers
- EAP/Union
- Chaplains
- Counselors

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What is coping?

- Investing in our own conscious effort, to solve personal and interpersonal problems, in order to try to master, minimize or tolerate stress and conflict.
- Why do we need coping skills?

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High-Quality connections

- Short term, positive interactions at work between two people
- Positive feeling when someone expresses genuine concern for your well-being post difficult situation



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How do we respond to one another?

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Active-Constructive Responding

- How someone responds to good news shared by others.
- Enthusiastic support and asking good questions encourages greater relationship satisfaction, higher quality relationships and fewer conflicts

	Active	Passive
Constructive	Enthusiastic Support	Understated Support
Destructive	Rain on their parade	Hijacking/Ignoring

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Why is talking about mental health so difficult?

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Putting it all together scenario

- What are your observations?
- What is your plan for approaching the situation?
- What information would you want to know?



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Putting it all together scenarios

Scenario 1

Firefighter Johnson is part of a crew that responded to a residential fire in which two children died and was one of the members who pulled the children out of the house. He is a former Marine who has been working on this crew for about four months and is known as a serious and focused firefighter. He also has two young children that are approximately the same age as the two that were killed. He claims that he is “fine,” but some of the other firefighters are concerned that he has become less social and seems more irritable since the fire.

Scenario 2

Firefighter Smith has been going through a divorce and custody battle for the last six months. Recently, he has started to arrive later and later for shift change, has started snapping at the members of the crew, and has been very isolated. On several occasions, he has reported to work smelling like alcohol, but blamed the new mouthwash that he was using. Lately, he has been complaining that if the department actually respected their employees, that they would “pay us a living wage, so we don’t have to work three extra jobs.”

Scenario 3

FF/Paramedic Evans walks into your office shortly after dinner. She mentions that she is having nightmares about a double-fatality fire that your shift worked last month and that she has been drinking heavily off-duty and lost faith in his ability to do her job. She feels like a failure and he is afraid that she will never be able to get past it. She wants your help, what are you going to do?

Scenario 4

FF Williams is the senior firefighter on your shift. The knowledge and skills that he has developed over the past 20 years is amazing. He is well respected by everyone and is often looked up to as the “rock” of the shift. Over the last 6 months, you have noticed FF Williams just does not seem to be himself anymore. You have noticed increased absenteeism, and he has been withdrawing from drills and company level activities. When asked about it, he answered, “Why bother to train, you can’t save them all.”

Scenario 5

Firefighter Jones is a 15-year member of the department and has a history of excellent performance at her job. Last month, she was involved in a near-miss in which a ceiling collapsed during a residential structure fire which could have easily killed her if she had not exited the house a few seconds prior. During the last several fires, you notice that Firefighter Jones is very hesitant to engage in fire suppression efforts. Other firefighters are beginning to be concerned about working with Firefighter Jones.

Behavioral Health Initiatives

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Important Phone Numbers

- Fire/EMS Helpline 1-888-731-3473 (FIRE)
- Crisis Text Line Text to 741741

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Stress First Aid Model

Seven Cs of Stress First Aid:

1. **CHECK**
Assess, observe and listen
2. **COORDINATE**
Get help, refer as needed
3. **COVER**
Get to safety ASAP
4. **CALM**
Relax, slow down, refocus
5. **CONNECT**
Get support from others
6. **COMPETENCE**
Restore effectiveness
7. **CONFIDENCE**
Restore self-esteem and hope

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Honoring & Remembering

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Memorials

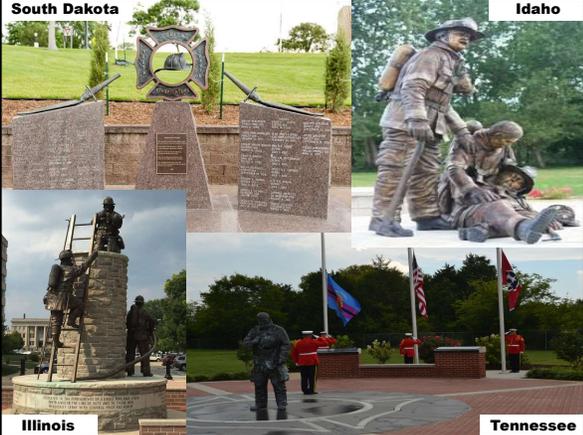
Maryland **North Carolina**



South Carolina **West Virginia**

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South Dakota **Idaho**



Illinois **Tennessee**

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Taking Care of Our Own®



BJA
Bureau of Justice Assistance
U.S. Department of Justice

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Resources

National Fallen Firefighters Foundation www.firehero.org

Local Assistance State Team program

www.firehero.org/resources/department-resources/programs/local-assistance-state-team/

Fire Service programs

www.firehero.org/resources/department-resources/programs

Public Safety Officers Benefit program <https://psob.bja.ojp.gov>

Everyone Goes Home program www.everyonegoeshome.com

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Fire Fighter Fatality

Investigation and Prevention program www.cdc.gov/niosh/fire

International Association of Fire Chiefs www.iafc.org

International Association of Fire Fighters www.iaff.org

National Volunteer Fire Council www.nvfc.org

Heart Healthy Firefighter program www.healthy-firefighter.org

United State Fire Administration www.usfa.fema.gov

Fire Hero Learning Network www.fireherolearningnetwork.com

U.S. Forest Service Fire and Aviation Management www.fs.fed.us/fire

COVID-19 & LODDs: How to honor the fallen during a pandemic

www.firerescue1.com/line-of-duty-death/articles/covid-19-lodds-how-to-honor-the-fallen-during-a-pandemic-04UfaQO2bJSfGFJC