

GOVERNMENT CODE

TITLE 6. PUBLIC OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES

SUBTITLE A. PROVISIONS GENERALLY APPLICABLE TO PUBLIC OFFICERS AND
EMPLOYEES

CHAPTER 615. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO SURVIVORS OF CERTAIN LAW
ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS, FIRE FIGHTERS, AND OTHERS

SUBCHAPTER A. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Sec. 615.001. DEFINITION. In this chapter, "minor child" means a child who:

(1) on the date of the death of an individual listed under Section 615.003, is younger than 18 years of age; and

(2) if the child is not a biological or adopted child, was claimed as a dependent on the federal income tax return of an individual listed under Section 615.003 for the year preceding the year of the individual's death.

Added by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 268, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Amended by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1541, Sec. 54, eff. Sept. 1, 1999; Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1231, Sec. 36, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

Sec. 615.002. ADMINISTRATION OF CHAPTER. The board of trustees of the Employees Retirement System of Texas shall administer this chapter under rules adopted by the board.

Added by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 268, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Text of section effective until January 01, 2025

Sec. 615.003. APPLICABILITY. This chapter applies only to eligible survivors of the following individuals:

(1) an individual:

(A) elected, appointed, or employed as a peace officer by the state or a political subdivision of the state under Article 2.12, Code of Criminal Procedure, or other law; or

(B) employed as a peace officer by a private institution of higher education, including a private junior college, that is located in this state under Section 51.212, Education Code;

(2) a paid probation officer appointed by the director of a community supervision and corrections department who has the duties set out in Section 76.002 and the qualifications set out in Section 76.005, or who was appointed in accordance with prior law;

(3) a parole officer employed by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice who has the duties set out in Section 508.001 and the qualifications set out in Section 508.113 or in prior law;

(4) a paid jailer;

(5) a member of an organized police reserve or auxiliary unit who regularly assists peace officers in enforcing criminal laws;

(6) a member of the class of employees of the correctional institutions division formally designated as custodial personnel under Section 615.006 by the Texas Board of Criminal Justice or its predecessor in function;

(7) a jailer or guard of a county jail who is appointed by the sheriff and who:

(A) performs a security, custodial, or supervisory function over the admittance, confinement, or discharge of prisoners; and

(B) is certified by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement;

(8) a juvenile correctional employee of the Texas Juvenile Justice Department;

(9) an employee of the Department of Aging and Disability Services or Department of State Health Services who:

(A) works at the department's maximum security unit; or

(B) performs on-site services for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice;

(10) an individual who is employed by the state or a political or legal subdivision and is subject to certification by the Texas Commission on Fire Protection;

(11) an individual employed by the state or a political or legal subdivision whose principal duties are aircraft crash and rescue fire fighting;

(12) a member of an organized volunteer fire-fighting

unit that:

(A) renders fire-fighting services without remuneration; and

(B) conducts a minimum of two drills each month, each two hours long;

(13) an individual who:

(A) performs emergency medical services or operates an ambulance;

(B) is employed by a political subdivision of the state or is an emergency medical services volunteer as defined by Section 773.003, Health and Safety Code; and

(C) is qualified as an emergency care attendant or at a higher level of training under Section 773.046, 773.047, 773.048, 773.049, or 773.0495, Health and Safety Code;

(14) an individual who is employed or formally designated as a chaplain for:

(A) an organized volunteer fire-fighting unit or other fire department of this state or of a political subdivision of this state;

(B) a law enforcement agency of this state or of a political subdivision of this state; or

(C) the Texas Department of Criminal Justice;

(15) an individual who is employed by the state or a political subdivision of the state and who is considered by the governmental employer to be a trainee for a position otherwise described by this section;

(16) an individual who is employed by the Department of Public Safety and, as certified by the director, is:

(A) deployed into the field in direct support of a law enforcement operation, including patrol, investigative, search and rescue, crime scene, on-site communications, or special operations; and

(B) given a special assignment in direct support of operations relating to organized crime, criminal interdiction, border security, counterterrorism, intelligence, traffic enforcement, emergency management, regulatory services, or special investigations; or

(17) an individual who is employed by the Parks and Wildlife Department and, as certified by the executive director of the Parks and Wildlife Department, is:

(A) deployed into the field in direct support of a law enforcement operation, including patrol, investigative, search and rescue, crime scene, on-site communications, or special operations; and

(B) given a special assignment in direct support of operations relating to organized crime, criminal interdiction, border security, counterterrorism, intelligence, traffic enforcement, emergency management, regulatory services, or special investigations.

Added by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 268, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1993. Amended by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 76, Sec. 5.12(b), eff. Sept. 1, 1995; Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 165, Sec. 12.17, eff. Sept. 1, 1997; Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1049, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1997; Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 874, Sec. 8, eff. Sept. 1, 2001; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 842, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2003; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1111, Sec. 43, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 55 (S.B. [872](#)), Sec. 1, eff. May 19, 2009.

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 87 (S.B. [1969](#)), Sec. 25.075, eff. September 1, 2009.

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 93 (S.B. [686](#)), Sec. 2.31, eff. May 18, 2013.

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1163 (S.B. [396](#)), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2013.

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 346 (H.B. [1526](#)), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2017.

Acts 2023, 88th Leg., R.S., Ch. 765 (H.B. [4504](#)), Sec. 2.109, eff. January 1, 2025.

Text of section effective on January 01, 2025

Sec. 615.003. APPLICABILITY. This chapter applies only to eligible survivors of the following individuals:

(1) an individual:

(A) elected, appointed, or employed as a peace officer by the state or a political subdivision of the state under Article 2A.001, Code of Criminal Procedure, or other law; or

(B) employed as a peace officer by a private institution of higher education, including a private junior college, that is located in this state under Section 51.212, Education Code;

(2) a paid probation officer appointed by the director of a community supervision and corrections department who has the duties set out in Section 76.002 and the qualifications set out in Section 76.005, or who was appointed in accordance with prior law;

(3) a parole officer employed by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice who has the duties set out in Section 508.001 and the qualifications set out in Section 508.113 or in prior law;

(4) a paid jailer;

(5) a member of an organized police reserve or auxiliary unit who regularly assists peace officers in enforcing criminal laws;

(6) a member of the class of employees of the correctional institutions division formally designated as custodial personnel under Section 615.006 by the Texas Board of Criminal Justice or its predecessor in function;

(7) a jailer or guard of a county jail who is appointed by the sheriff and who:

(A) performs a security, custodial, or supervisory function over the admittance, confinement, or discharge of prisoners; and

(B) is certified by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement;

(8) a juvenile correctional employee of the Texas Juvenile Justice Department;

(9) an employee of the Department of Aging and Disability Services or Department of State Health Services who:

(A) works at the department's maximum security unit; or

(B) performs on-site services for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice;

(10) an individual who is employed by the state or a political or legal subdivision and is subject to certification by the Texas Commission on Fire Protection;

(11) an individual employed by the state or a political or legal subdivision whose principal duties are aircraft crash and rescue fire fighting;

(12) a member of an organized volunteer fire-fighting unit that:

(A) renders fire-fighting services without remuneration; and

(B) conducts a minimum of two drills each month, each two hours long;

(13) an individual who:

(A) performs emergency medical services or operates an ambulance;

(B) is employed by a political subdivision of the state or is an emergency medical services volunteer as defined by Section 773.003, Health and Safety Code; and

(C) is qualified as an emergency care attendant or at a higher level of training under Section 773.046, 773.047, 773.048, 773.049, or 773.0495, Health and Safety Code;

(14) an individual who is employed or formally designated as a chaplain for:

(A) an organized volunteer fire-fighting unit or other fire department of this state or of a political subdivision of this state;

(B) a law enforcement agency of this state or of a political subdivision of this state; or

(C) the Texas Department of Criminal Justice;

(15) an individual who is employed by the state or a political subdivision of the state and who is considered by the governmental employer to be a trainee for a position otherwise described by this section;

(16) an individual who is employed by the Department of Public Safety and, as certified by the director, is:

(A) deployed into the field in direct support of a law enforcement operation, including patrol, investigative,

search and rescue, crime scene, on-site communications, or special operations; and

(B) given a special assignment in direct support of operations relating to organized crime, criminal interdiction, border security, counterterrorism, intelligence, traffic enforcement, emergency management, regulatory services, or special investigations; or

(17) an individual who is employed by the Parks and Wildlife Department and, as certified by the executive director of the Parks and Wildlife Department, is:

(A) deployed into the field in direct support of a law enforcement operation, including patrol, investigative, search and rescue, crime scene, on-site communications, or special operations; and

(B) given a special assignment in direct support of operations relating to organized crime, criminal interdiction, border security, counterterrorism, intelligence, traffic enforcement, emergency management, regulatory services, or special investigations.

Added by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 268, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1993. Amended by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 76, Sec. 5.12(b), eff. Sept. 1, 1995; Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 165, Sec. 12.17, eff. Sept. 1, 1997; Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1049, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1997; Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 874, Sec. 8, eff. Sept. 1, 2001; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 842, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2003; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1111, Sec. 43, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 55 (S.B. [872](#)), Sec. 1, eff. May 19, 2009.

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 87 (S.B. [1969](#)), Sec. 25.075, eff. September 1, 2009.

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 93 (S.B. [686](#)), Sec. 2.31, eff. May 18, 2013.

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1163 (S.B. [396](#)), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2013.

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 346 (H.B. [1526](#)), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2017.

Acts 2023, 88th Leg., R.S., Ch. 765 (H.B. 4504), Sec. 2.109, eff. January 1, 2025.

Sec. 615.004. EFFECT OF AWARD. (a) A finding that assistance is payable to an eligible survivor of an individual listed under Section 615.003 or 615.024 is not a declaration of the cause, nature, or effect of a death for any other purpose.

(b) A finding that a death is within the provisions of this chapter does not affect another claim or cause of action arising from or connected to the death.

Added by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 268, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Amended by:

Acts 2023, 88th Leg., R.S., Ch. 660 (H.B. 90), Sec. 3, eff. September 1, 2023.

Sec. 615.005. ASSISTANCE NOT ASSIGNABLE; PAYMENTS EXEMPT.

(a) Assistance payable under this chapter is not transferable or assignable at law or in equity.

(b) Money paid or payable under this chapter is not subject to execution, levy, attachment, garnishment, or other legal process or to the operation of any insolvency law.

Added by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 268, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Sec. 615.006. DESIGNATION OF CUSTODIAL PERSONNEL. The Texas Board of Criminal Justice shall adopt and include in its minutes a formal designation identifying the classes of persons who are custodial personnel of the agency so that there is no uncertainty about which persons are custodial personnel.

Added by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 268, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Sec. 615.007. CERTAIN VOLUNTEER FIRE-FIGHTING UNITS CONSIDERED AGENTS OF POLITICAL SUBDIVISION. For the purposes of this chapter, an organized volunteer fire-fighting unit described by Section 615.003(12) is considered an agent of a political subdivision, including a municipality, county, or district, that the unit serves if:

(1) the unit receives any financial aid from the

political subdivision for the maintenance, upkeep, or storage of equipment; or

(2) the governing body of the political subdivision designates the unit as an agent of the political subdivision.

Added by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 268, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Sec. 615.008. CERTAIN POLICE RESERVE OR AUXILIARY UNITS CONSIDERED AGENTS OF POLITICAL SUBDIVISION. For the purposes of this chapter, an organized police reserve or auxiliary unit is considered an agent of a political subdivision, including a municipality, county, or district, that the unit serves if the governing body of the political subdivision designates the unit as an agent of the political subdivision.

Added by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 268, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

SUBCHAPTER B. PAYMENTS TO ELIGIBLE SURVIVORS

Sec. 615.021. ELIGIBLE SURVIVORS. (a) A survivor of an individual listed under Section 615.003 is eligible for the payment of assistance under this chapter if:

(1) the listed individual died as a result of a personal injury sustained in the line of duty in the individual's position as described by Section 615.003; and

(2) the survivor is:

(A) the surviving spouse of the listed individual;

(B) a surviving child of the listed individual, if there is no surviving spouse; or

(C) a surviving parent of the listed individual, if there is no surviving spouse or child.

(b) Payment of assistance may not occur under this subchapter unless an individual is eligible under Subsection (a) or Section 615.024.

(c) An individual employed by the state or a political or legal subdivision who is subject to certification by the Texas Commission on Fire Protection or whose principal duties are aircraft crash and rescue fire fighting is considered to have died

as a result of a personal injury sustained in the line of duty in the individual's position as described by Section 615.003 if the individual died while actually performing an activity that the individual was certified to perform by the Texas Commission on Fire Protection, without regard to whether the individual was actually performing the activity during the individual's compensable hours at work.

(d) In a determination of whether the survivor of an individual listed under Section 615.003 is eligible for the payment of assistance under this chapter, any reasonable doubt arising from the circumstances of the individual's death shall be resolved in favor of the payment of assistance to the survivor.

(e) In this section:

(1) "Personal injury" means an injury resulting from an external force, an activity, or a disease caused by or resulting from:

(A) a line-of-duty accident; or

(B) an illness caused by line-of-duty work under hazardous conditions.

(2) "Line of duty" means an action an individual listed under Section 615.003 is required or authorized by rule, condition of employment, or law to perform. The term includes:

(A) an action by the individual at a social, ceremonial, athletic, or other function to which the individual is assigned by the individual's employer; and

(B) an action performed as part of a training program the individual is required or authorized by rule, condition of employment, or law to undertake.

Added by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 268, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1993. Amended by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 76, Sec. 5.12(a), eff. Sept. 1, 1995; Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1049, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1997; Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1438, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2001; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 842, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 55 (S.B. 872), Sec. 2, eff. May 19, 2009.

Acts 2023, 88th Leg., R.S., Ch. 660 (H.B. 90), Sec. 4, eff.

September 1, 2023.

Sec. 615.022. PAYMENT TO SURVIVORS. (a) If there is an eligible surviving spouse, the state shall pay the benefits described by Subsection (d) to the eligible surviving spouse.

(b) If there is no eligible surviving spouse, the state shall pay the benefits described by Subsection (d) in equal shares to surviving children.

(c) If there is no eligible surviving spouse or child, the state shall pay the benefits described by Subsection (d) in equal shares to surviving parents.

(d) An eligible survivor, or eligible survivors in equal shares, are entitled to receive a lump sum payment in the amount provided by this subsection. The lump sum payment amount payable to an eligible survivor during the 12 months beginning September 1, 2019, is \$500,000. Effective September 1 of each following year, the board of trustees of the Employees Retirement System of Texas by rule shall adjust the amount of the lump sum payment required under this subsection by an amount equal to the percentage change in the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers, published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the United States Department of Labor for the preceding year. The amount paid to an eligible survivor or survivors as adjusted under this subsection is calculated based on the date of the decedent's death and not on the date the eligible survivor or survivors file a claim under this chapter.

Added by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 268, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Amended by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 76, Sec. 5.12(c), eff. Sept. 1, 1995; Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1438, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 718 (H.B. [1278](#)), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2015.

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1181 (H.B. [3635](#)), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2019.

Sec. 615.023. PAYMENT TO SURVIVING MINOR CHILD. (a) The state shall pay to the duly appointed or qualified guardian or other legal representative of an eligible surviving minor child:

- (1) \$400 each month, if there is one surviving child;
- (2) \$600 each month, if there are two surviving children; or
- (3) \$800 each month, if there are three or more surviving children.

(b) A child's entitlement to assistance payable under this section ends on the last day of the month that includes the child's 18th birthday. At that time, payments to any other surviving minor children shall be adjusted, as necessary, to conform to the amounts payable under Subsection (a).

(c) A payment under this section is in addition to any payment made under Section [615.022](#).

Added by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 268, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.
Amended by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1231, Sec. 37, eff. Sept. 1, 2001. Reenacted by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1111, Sec. 7, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 718 (H.B. [1278](#)), Sec. 2, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 615.024. PAYMENT TO SURVIVORS OF MEMBERS OF TEXAS MILITARY FORCES. (a) In this section, "state active duty," "Texas military forces," and "Texas National Guard" have the meanings assigned by Section [437.001](#).

(b) Notwithstanding Section [615.003](#) or [615.021](#), a survivor of an individual who is a member of the Texas military forces is eligible to receive a lump sum payment described by Section [615.022](#) and monthly assistance described by Section [615.023](#), as applicable, which are the exclusive benefits available under this chapter, if:

- (1) the individual died while on state active duty;
- (2) the Texas Military Department certifies to the Employees Retirement System of Texas that the circumstances of the individual's death entitle an eligible survivor to the payment of assistance under this chapter; and
- (3) the survivor is:
 - (A) if the individual is a member of the Texas National Guard, a beneficiary designated by the individual on the

individual's United States Department of Defense Form DD-93; or

(B) if the individual is not a member of the Texas National Guard or there is no beneficiary described by Paragraph (A):

(i) the surviving spouse of the individual;
(ii) a surviving child of the individual, if there is no surviving spouse; or
(iii) the surviving parent of the individual, if there is no surviving spouse or child.

(c) The Texas Military Department shall adopt rules providing the circumstances under which the death of an individual described by Subsection (b) entitles an eligible survivor to the payment of assistance under this chapter.

Added by Acts 2023, 88th Leg., R.S., Ch. 660 (H.B. 90), Sec. 5, eff. September 1, 2023.

SUBCHAPTER C. ADMINISTRATION AND PROCEDURE

Sec. 615.041. CONSIDERATION AND DETERMINATION OF CLAIM; COMPELLED COMPLIANCE. (a) Not later than the 30th day after the date of the death of an individual listed under Section 615.003 that occurs in the performance of duties in the individual's position as described by Section 615.003 or as a result of an action that occurs while the individual is performing those duties, the individual's employing entity shall furnish to the board of trustees of the Employees Retirement System of Texas proof of the death in the form and with additional evidence and information required by the board. The employing entity shall furnish the evidence and information required under this subsection regardless of whether the employing entity believes the individual's death satisfies the eligibility requirements established under Section 615.021(a)(1).

(b) The board of trustees shall consider the proof, evidence, and information provided under Subsection (a), and any additional information required by the rules adopted in accordance with Section 615.002, to determine whether the individual's death satisfies the eligibility requirements established under Section 615.021(a)(1) and justifies the payment of assistance to the

individual's eligible survivors under this chapter.

(c) If the individual's employing entity fails to comply with Subsection (a), the attorney general may use any means authorized by law, including filing suit for a writ of mandamus against the employer, to compel the employer's compliance with this section.

Added by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 268, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Amended by:

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 50 (S.B. 423), Sec. 1, eff. May 12, 2011.

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1049 (H.B. 872), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2019.

Sec. 615.042. AWARD AND PAYMENT OF ASSISTANCE. (a) The Employees Retirement System of Texas shall notify the comptroller of the retirement system's determination that a claim under this chapter is valid and justifies payment.

(b) On receipt of the notice, the comptroller shall issue a warrant to each claimant in the proper amount from the fund appropriated for that purpose.

(c) Payments under this chapter on behalf of a surviving child are payable beginning on the first day of the first month after the death of the individual listed in Section 615.003.

Added by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 268, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Amended by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1231, Sec. 38, eff. Sept. 1, 2001; Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1438, Sec. 4, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

Sec. 615.043. DENIAL OF CLAIM. If the Employees Retirement System of Texas denies a claim, the retirement system shall send a notice of the denial to:

(1) the person making the claim; or

(2) the duly qualified guardian or legal representative of a surviving minor child, if a claim is being made on behalf of the child.

Added by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 268, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Amended by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1231, Sec. 39, eff. Sept. 1, 2001; Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1438, Sec. 5, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

Sec. 615.044. APPEALS. (a) An eligible survivor or the eligible survivor's legal representative whose claim for payment is denied may appeal the denial to the board of trustees of the Employees Retirement System of Texas.

(b) An appeal under this section is considered to be an appeal of a contested case under Chapter 2001 and shall be conducted as provided by Section 815.511.

(c) Judicial review of a decision under this section is under the substantial evidence rule as provided by Chapter 2001.

Added by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 268, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1993.

Amended by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1231, Sec. 40, eff. Sept. 1, 2001; Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1438, Sec. 6, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

Sec. 615.045. RECORDS. (a) Records of individuals listed by Section 615.003 or described by Section 615.024 and of survivors eligible for benefits under this chapter that are in the custody of the Employees Retirement System of Texas, an administering firm as defined by Section 1551.003, Insurance Code, a carrier as defined by Section 1551.007, Insurance Code, or another governmental agency acting with or on behalf of the retirement system are confidential and not subject to public disclosure, and the retirement system, administering firm, carrier, or governmental agency is not required to accept or comply with a request for a record or information about a record or to seek an opinion from the attorney general, because the records are exempt from the provisions of Chapter 552, except as otherwise provided by this section.

(b) Records may be released to an eligible survivor or to an authorized attorney, family member, or representative acting on behalf of the eligible survivor. The Employees Retirement System of Texas may release the records to an administering firm, carrier, agent, or attorney acting on behalf of the retirement system, to another governmental entity having a legitimate need for the information to perform the purposes of the retirement system, or to a party in response to a subpoena issued under applicable law.

(b-1) A record released or received by the retirement system under this section may be transmitted electronically, including

through the use of an electronic signature or certification in a form acceptable to the retirement system. An unintentional disclosure to, or unauthorized access by, a third party related to the transmission or receipt of information under this section is not a violation by the retirement system of any law, including a law or rule relating to the protection of confidential information.

(c) The records of individuals listed by Section 615.003 or described by Section 615.024 and of eligible survivors remain confidential after release to a person as authorized by this section. The records of individuals listed by Section 615.003 or described by Section 615.024 and of eligible survivors may become part of the public record of an administrative or judicial proceeding related to an appeal filed under this chapter, unless the records are closed to public access by a protective order issued under applicable law.

(d) The retirement system has sole discretion in determining whether a record is subject to this section. For purposes of this section, a record includes any identifying information about any person, living or deceased, who is or was:

(1) an individual listed in Section 615.003 or described by Section 615.024; or

(2) a survivor, heir, or beneficiary of an individual listed in Section 615.003 or described by Section 615.024.

Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1231, Sec. 41, eff. Sept. 1, 2001. Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1111, Sec. 8, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 1308 (H.B. 2559), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2009.

Acts 2023, 88th Leg., R.S., Ch. 660 (H.B. 90), Sec. 6, eff. September 1, 2023.

SUBCHAPTER D. HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR ELIGIBLE SURVIVORS

Sec. 615.071. APPLICABILITY. This subchapter applies only to eligible survivors of:

(1) an individual listed in Section 615.003(1), (6),

or (7);

(2) an individual listed in Section 615.003(10) or (11) who is employed by a political subdivision of the state; or

(3) an individual who is:

(A) described by Section 615.003(15); and

(B) employed as a trainee for a position otherwise described by this section.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 76, Sec. 5.13(a), eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Amended by:

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 50 (S.B. 423), Sec. 3, eff. May 12, 2011.

Sec. 615.072. ELIGIBLE SURVIVORS. (a) A survivor of an individual listed under Section 615.071 is eligible for the health insurance benefits provided under this subchapter if:

(1) the listed individual died as a result of a personal injury sustained in the line of duty in the individual's position as described by Section 615.071; and

(2) the survivor is:

(A) the surviving spouse of the listed individual; or

(B) a dependent of the listed individual.

(b) In a determination of whether the survivor of an individual listed under Section 615.071 is eligible for the payment of assistance under this subchapter, any reasonable doubt arising from the circumstances of the individual's death shall be resolved in favor of the payment of assistance to the survivor.

(b-1) A survivor of an individual listed under Section 615.071 who would have been eligible for health insurance benefits during the life of the individual may not be denied health insurance benefits on the ground that the survivor was enrolled in group health insurance with another employer as of the date of the individual's death.

(c) In this section:

(1) "Personal injury" means an injury resulting from an external force, an activity, or a disease caused by or resulting

from:

(A) a line-of-duty accident; or

(B) an illness caused by line-of-duty work under hazardous conditions.

(2) "Line of duty" means an action an individual listed under Section 615.071 is required or authorized by rule, condition of employment, or law to perform. The term includes an action by the individual at a social, ceremonial, athletic, or other function to which the individual is assigned by the individual's employer.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 76, Sec. 5.13(a), eff. Sept. 1, 1995. Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 842, Sec. 3, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 50 (S.B. 423), Sec. 4, eff. May 12, 2011.

Sec. 615.073. BENEFIT TO SURVIVING SPOUSE. (a) An eligible surviving spouse of a deceased individual listed in Section 615.071 who was employed by the state is entitled to purchase or continue to purchase health insurance benefits under Chapter 1551, Insurance Code, as provided by this subchapter.

(b) An eligible surviving spouse of a deceased individual listed in Section 615.071 who was employed by a political subdivision of the state is entitled to purchase or continue to purchase health insurance benefits from the political subdivision that employed the deceased individual, including health coverage:

(1) provided by or through a political subdivision under:

(A) a health insurance policy or health benefit plan written by a health insurer; or

(B) a self-insured health benefits plan; or

(2) under Chapter 172, Local Government Code.

(c) The surviving spouse is entitled to purchase or continue to purchase health insurance coverage until the date the surviving spouse becomes eligible for federal Medicare benefits.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 76, Sec. 5.13(a), eff. Sept. 1,

1995. Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 103, Sec. 1, eff. May 20, 2003; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1276, Sec. 10A.518, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 55 (S.B. 872), Sec. 3, eff. May 19, 2009.

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 50 (S.B. 423), Sec. 5, eff. May 12, 2011.

Sec. 615.074. BENEFIT TO DEPENDENT. (a) An eligible surviving dependent who is a minor child is entitled to purchase or continue to purchase health insurance coverage until the date the dependent reaches the age of 18 or a later date to the extent required by state or federal law.

(b) An eligible surviving dependent who is not a minor child is entitled to purchase or continue to purchase health insurance coverage until the earlier of:

(1) the date the dependent becomes eligible for group health insurance through another employer; or

(2) the date the dependent becomes eligible for federal Medicare benefits.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 76, Sec. 5.13(a), eff. Sept. 1, 1995. Amended by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1231, Sec. 42, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

Amended by:

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 55 (S.B. 872), Sec. 4, eff. May 19, 2009.

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 50 (S.B. 423), Sec. 6, eff. May 12, 2011.

Sec. 615.075. NOTICE. (a) An employing entity shall provide written notice to an eligible survivor to whom this subchapter may apply of the survivor's rights under this subchapter not later than the 10th day after the date of the decedent's death. Not later than the 150th day after the date of the decedent's death, the employing entity shall send a subsequent written notice under this subsection by certified mail to any

eligible survivor who has not already elected to purchase or continue to purchase coverage on or before that date.

(b) If an eligible survivor is a minor child, the employing entity shall also, at the same time, provide the notice to the child's parent or guardian, unless, after reasonable effort, the parent or guardian cannot be located.

(c) To receive coverage under this subchapter, the employing entity must be informed not later than the 180th day after the date the decedent died that the eligible survivor elects to purchase or continue to purchase coverage.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 76, Sec. 5.13(a), eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Amended by:

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 55 (S.B. 872), Sec. 5, eff. May 19, 2009.

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 50 (S.B. 423), Sec. 7, eff. May 12, 2011.

Sec. 615.076. LEVEL OF COVERAGE. (a) An eligible survivor may elect to purchase or continue to purchase coverage at any level of benefits currently offered by the employing entity to dependents of an active employee.

(b) An eligible survivor may elect to purchase or continue to purchase coverage at a reduced level of benefits if the employing entity offers that option.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 76, Sec. 5.13(a), eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Amended by:

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 50 (S.B. 423), Sec. 8, eff. May 12, 2011.

Sec. 615.077. PAYMENTS; RATE. An eligible survivor who is entitled to coverage under this subchapter:

(1) is entitled to:

(A) make payments for the coverage or have payments made on the survivor's behalf at the same time and to the same entity that payments for coverage are made by current

employees of the employing entity; and

(B) obtain the coverage at the rate paid by current employees of the employing entity for that coverage; and

(2) may not be required to pay a premium amount for the coverage that is greater than the premium amount that a current employee of the employing entity without a spouse is required to pay to cover the employee alone or to cover the employee and the employee's dependent children, as applicable to the eligible survivor.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 76, Sec. 5.13(a), eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Amended by:

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 55 (S.B. 872), Sec. 6, eff. May 19, 2009.

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 50 (S.B. 423), Sec. 9, eff. May 12, 2011.

Sec. 615.078. CERTAIN PRACTICES NOT PROHIBITED OR AFFECTED.

This subchapter does not:

(1) prohibit an employing entity from uniformly changing the group health insurance plan or group health coverage plan provided for its employees and employees' dependents;

(2) affect the definition of a dependent or the eligibility requirements for a dependent under a plan;

(3) prohibit an employing entity from increasing the cost of group health coverage to its employees and to eligible survivors covered under this subchapter to reflect any increased cost attributable to compliance with this subchapter; or

(4) affect the right of a political subdivision to self-insure or provide coverage under Chapter 172, Local Government Code.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 76, Sec. 5.13(a), eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 615.079. BENEFITS ADDITIONAL. The benefits provided by this subchapter are in addition to any other benefits provided by this chapter.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 76, Sec. 5.13(a), eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 615.080. GRACE PERIOD. Health insurance benefits coverage in force on the date of the decedent's death under which a deceased individual listed under Section 615.071 covered one or more other persons may not lapse before the 181st day after the date of the decedent's death for failure to pay the premium.

Added by Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 55 (S.B. 872), Sec. 7, eff. May 19, 2009.

SUBCHAPTER E. ADDITIONAL BENEFITS FOR ELIGIBLE SURVIVORS

Sec. 615.101. DEFINITION. In this subchapter, "governmental entity" includes the state, an agency or institution of the state, or a political subdivision of the state.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 76, Sec. 5.13(a), eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 615.102. DUTY WEAPON AND BADGE.

Text of subsection effective until January 01, 2025

(a) This section applies only to:

(1) an individual listed in Section 615.003(1) who is employed by a political subdivision of the state;

(2) a peace officer under Article 2.12, Code of Criminal Procedure, or other law who is employed by the state, including any state agency or any institution of higher education under Section 61.003, Education Code; or

(3) an individual listed in Section 615.003(7).

Text of subsection effective on January 01, 2025

(a) This section applies only to:

(1) an individual listed in Section 615.003(1) who is employed by a political subdivision of the state;

(2) a peace officer under Article 2A.001, Code of Criminal Procedure, or other law who is employed by the state, including any state agency or any institution of higher education

under Section 61.003, Education Code; or

(3) an individual listed in Section 615.003(7).

(b) On the death of an individual listed in Subsection (a), the employing governmental entity shall provide, at no cost, the deceased individual's duty weapon, if any, and badge to the individual's:

(1) designated beneficiary; or

(2) estate if the individual did not designate a beneficiary.

(c) A governmental entity that employs an individual listed in Subsection (a) shall provide the individual a form on which the individual may designate the individual's beneficiaries for purposes of this section.

(d) A governmental entity is not liable for damages caused by the use or misuse of a duty weapon provided to a designated beneficiary or estate under this section.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 76, Sec. 5.13(a), eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Amended by:

Acts 2023, 88th Leg., R.S., Ch. 765 (H.B. 4504), Sec. 2.110, eff. January 1, 2025.

Sec. 615.103. BURIAL WITH UNIFORM.

Text of subsection effective until January 01, 2025

(a) This section applies only to:

(1) an individual listed in Section 615.003(1) who is employed by a political subdivision of the state;

(2) a peace officer under Article 2.12, Code of Criminal Procedure, or other law who is employed by the state, including any state agency or any institution of higher education under Section 61.003, Education Code;

(3) an individual listed in Section 615.003(7); or

(4) an individual listed in Section 615.003(10) or (11) who is employed by a political subdivision of the state.

Text of subsection effective on January 01, 2025

(a) This section applies only to:

(1) an individual listed in Section 615.003(1) who is employed by a political subdivision of the state;

(2) a peace officer under Article 2A.001, Code of Criminal Procedure, or other law who is employed by the state, including any state agency or any institution of higher education under Section 61.003, Education Code;

(3) an individual listed in Section 615.003(7); or

(4) an individual listed in Section 615.003(10) or (11) who is employed by a political subdivision of the state.

(b) If an individual listed in Subsection (a) dies and is to be buried in the individual's uniform, the employing governmental entity shall provide the uniform at no cost.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 76, Sec. 5.13(a), eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Amended by:

Acts 2023, 88th Leg., R.S., Ch. 765 (H.B. 4504), Sec. 2.111, eff. January 1, 2025.

Sec. 615.104. BENEFITS ADDITIONAL. The benefits provided by this subchapter are in addition to any other benefits provided by this chapter.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 76, Sec. 5.13(a), eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 615.105. PROVISION OF STATE FLAG.

Text of subsection effective until January 01, 2025

(a) This section applies only to:

(1) an individual elected, appointed, or employed as a peace officer by the state or a political subdivision of the state under Article 2.12, Code of Criminal Procedure, or other law; or

(2) an honorably retired peace officer who formerly held a position described by Subdivision (1) and voluntarily terminated employment with a law enforcement agency of this state or a political subdivision of this state.

Text of subsection effective on January 01, 2025

(a) This section applies only to:

(1) an individual elected, appointed, or employed as a peace officer by the state or a political subdivision of the state under Article [2A.001](#), Code of Criminal Procedure, or other law; or

(2) an honorably retired peace officer who formerly held a position described by Subdivision (1) and voluntarily terminated employment with a law enforcement agency of this state or a political subdivision of this state.

(b) On the death of an individual listed in Subsection (a), regardless of whether the individual died as a result of a personal injury sustained in the line of duty as a peace officer, the individual's next of kin may receive on request a state flag from the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement.

(c) If the office of the governor is notified of the death of an individual listed in Subsection (a) by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement under Section [1701.161](#), Occupations Code, the office of the governor shall send to the individual's next of kin a certificate that expresses condolences and gratitude on behalf of the governor and the people of Texas for the individual's service as a Texas peace officer.

Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 476, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.
Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 842, Sec. 4, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 744 (H.B. [2769](#)), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2005.

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 93 (S.B. [686](#)), Sec. 2.32, eff. May 18, 2013.

Acts 2023, 88th Leg., R.S., Ch. 765 (H.B. [4504](#)), Sec. 2.112, eff. January 1, 2025.

SUBCHAPTER F. ADDITIONAL BENEFITS FOR SURVIVOR OF PEACE OFFICER

Sec. 615.121. PAYMENT TO SURVIVING SPOUSE. (a) The state shall pay the following benefits to an eligible surviving spouse of a peace officer, a jailer, a county jailer or guard, or an employee of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, as described by Section [615.003](#)(1), (4), (6), or (7), who was killed in the line of

duty and who had not qualified for an annuity under an employees' retirement plan:

(1) funeral expenses related to the deceased person; and

(2) monthly payments that equal the greater of:

(A) the monthly annuity payment the deceased person would have received if the deceased person had survived, had retired on the last day of the month in which the person died, and had been eligible to receive an annuity under an employees' retirement plan; or

(B) the minimum monthly annuity payment the deceased person would have received if the person had been employed by the state for 10 years, had been paid a salary at the lowest amount provided by the General Appropriations Act for a position of peace officer, jailer, county jailer or guard, or employee of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, as described by Section [615.003](#)(1), (4), (6), or (7), and had been eligible to retire under the Employees Retirement System of Texas.

(b) The surviving spouse is entitled to continue to receive monthly payments under Subsection (a) until the earlier of:

(1) the date the surviving spouse remarries;

(2) the date the surviving spouse becomes eligible for retirement under an employees' retirement plan; or

(3) the date the surviving spouse becomes eligible for Social Security benefits.

(c) The Employees Retirement System of Texas may require the surviving spouse to provide information as necessary to administer this section.

(d) The Employees Retirement System of Texas may adopt rules necessary to administer this section including rules:

(1) setting the maximum amount of funeral expenses payable under this subchapter; and

(2) calculating the survivor benefits payable under this subchapter.

(e) The Employees Retirement System of Texas shall apply reduction factors, as applicable to an annuity payable under this section, in the same manner the factors are applied to a death

benefit plan administered by the system.

(f) In this section, "line of duty" has the meaning assigned by Section [615.021](#).

Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1438, Sec. 7, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 842, Sec. 5, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 87 (S.B. [1969](#)), Sec. 25.076, eff. September 1, 2009.

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1049 (H.B. [872](#)), Sec. 2, eff. September 1, 2019.

Sec. 615.122. PAYMENT TO SURVIVING MINOR CHILDREN. If an eligible surviving spouse who would be entitled to benefits under Section [615.121](#) does not exist but one or more eligible surviving minor children of the deceased peace officer or employee of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, as described by Section [615.003](#)(1) or (6), do exist, the state shall pay to the guardian or other legal representative of those children the funeral expenses of the deceased officer or employee.

Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1438, Sec. 7, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

Amended by:

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 87 (S.B. [1969](#)), Sec. 25.077, eff. September 1, 2009.

Sec. 615.123. BENEFITS ADDITIONAL. The benefits provided by this subchapter are in addition to any other benefits provided by this chapter.

Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1438, Sec. 7, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.