



California PPO Fact Sheet

A plain-English summary of the Private Patrol Operator (PPO) license and the Qualified Manager role — adapted from the California BSIS Private Patrol Operator / Qualified Manager fact sheet.

The one-line version: A PPO is the state license that lets a company sell contract security guard services in California. The company holds the license; guards hold a registration (a “guard card”). Every PPO must have a designated **Qualified Manager (QM)** in active charge of day-to-day operations.

1 What a PPO is — and isn't

A **Private Patrol Operator (PPO)** is licensed to provide contract security guard services to clients. A **Proprietary Private Security Employer (PSE)**, by contrast, employs in-house officers to guard a single employer and cannot contract them out. If you sell security services to clients, you need a PPO.

- ✓ Governed by the Private Security Services Act (Business & Professions Code §§ 7580–7588.8) and Title 16 of the California Code of Regulations.
- ✓ Administered by the Bureau of Security and Investigative Services (BSIS), part of the Department of Consumer Affairs.
- ✓ Operating without the license is a misdemeanor. The license is valid for **two years**.

2 The Qualified Manager (QM)

Every PPO must designate one QM responsible for the day-to-day operation of the business. You may qualify yourself or hire one. As of **January 1, 2025 (AB 1244)**, the experience bar rose:

- ✓ **6,000 hours of compensated experience** total — at least 4,000 hours as a patrolperson/guard/watchperson, plus at least 2,000 hours in a management or administrative role under a licensed, current PPO.
- ✓ Pass a **two-hour, multiple-choice Qualified Manager exam**.
- ✓ Clear a background check via Live Scan (California DOJ and FBI).
- ✓ If the QM disassociates from the company, BSIS must be notified within **30 days** — or the license is automatically suspended.

3 Business structure

Choose your legal entity before you apply. A PPO license **cannot be held by an LLC** — the options are a sole owner, a partnership, or a corporation (many operators choose a corporation for liability protection).

BSIS ties the license to the exact entity registered with the California Secretary of State, so pick the name and structure carefully.

4 The application

- ✓ Form your entity with the Secretary of State.
- ✓ Complete Live Scan fingerprinting for every owner, partner, officer, and the QM.
- ✓ Have your QM pass the QM exam.
- ✓ Request business-name authorization (list five names in order of preference).
- ✓ Submit the company application with fees and your insurance certificate.

Fees & timeline

Plan for roughly **\$1,450** in BSIS company fees (often ~\$605 application + ~\$847 license), plus a separate QM application/exam fee.

FEES CHANGED OCT 2025 Confirm current amounts with BSIS. A clean application takes about **four months**; applying online through **BreEZe** is fastest.

5 Insurance

Insurance is a condition of licensure. A PPO must carry commercial general liability of at least **\$1,000,000**, with the certificate naming your **exact approved business name** (obtained after the Bureau approves your name). Armed operations have historically been framed as \$500,000 bodily injury / \$500,000 property damage. Workers' compensation is required once you hire.

6 Guards & training

Your officers are **registered, not licensed**. A guard card requires the officer to be 18+, pass a background check, and is valid two years. Training:

- ✓ Power to Arrest and appropriate use-of-force training before assignment.
- ✓ **40 hours of skills training** total — 8 hours up front, 16 within the first 30 days, 16 within the first six months. Under **SB 652 (2026)**, part of the entry training must now be delivered in person.

7 Armed services (optional)

- ✓ Firearm permit: officer must be 21+, complete a 14-hour course, pass an assessment, and requalify four times over the two-year permit. A BSIS firearm permit allows exposed carry on duty only — it is not a concealed-weapon permit.
- ✓ Baton and pepper spray each require their own permit and training.

Source & disclaimer: Adapted in plain English from the California BSIS Private Patrol Operator / Qualified Manager fact sheet and the Private Security Services Act. This document is education, not legal advice, and requirements, fees, and training hours change. Always verify current rules at **bsis.ca.gov** before you act. Not affiliated with or endorsed by BSIS or the State of California. · © 2026 CaliforniaQM · CaliforniaQM.com