Questions to Ask

- Do I still need life insurance protection?
- If I sell my policy, how do they decide how much cash I get?
- Is this an employer or other group policy? If so, do I need permission to sell it?
- If I sell my policy, who will be the legal owner?
- Do I need the advice of a tax or estate planning advisor before I decide to sell my policy?
- Who will have specific information about me, my family or my health status?
- After I sell my policy, can it be resold by the buyer?

Your state insurance department may have a list of viatical settlement providers and brokers that are licensed to do business in the state. Contact them to make sure yours are on the list.

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Always Check with Your State

Contact your state insurance or securities departments to learn about the issues and risks of viatical settlements *if*:

- you're considering selling your life insurance policy;
- you're asked to sell your life insurance policy *and* your health hasn't changed since you bought the policy;
- you're asked to buy a new life insurance policy *and* immediately sell it for cash.

Buying a Life Insurance Policy?

If you're interested in buying a life insurance policy as an investment, contact your state insurance department *before* you make a decision.

STATE INSURANCE DEPARTMENT

State Insurance Department

Selling Your Life Insurance Policy

Understanding Viatical Settlements

What is a Viatical Settlement?

A viatical settlement is the sale of a life insurance policy to a third party. The owner (*viator*) of the life insurance policy sells the policy for an immediate cash benefit.

The buyer (the viatical settlement provider) becomes the new owner of the life insurance policy, pays future premiums, and collects the death benefit when the insured dies.

At one time, most viatical settlements were from people with a life-threatening illness. Now, individuals who are not facing a health crisis may sell their life insurance policies to get cash.

Your state insurance department and the National Association of Insurance Commissioners want you to have the facts before you sell your life insurance policy. This brochure provides some of that information, but it is only a starting point. Consult your own professional financial advisor, attorney, or accountant to help you decide if this is the most suitable arrangement for you.

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Need to pick an appropriate graphic

Consider Your Options

If you're selling your policy to get cash to pay expenses, check all of your options. You may find a way to get more cash from your life insurance policy.

1. Ask your insurance agent or company if you have any cash value in your life insurance policy. You may be able to use some of the cash value to meet your immediate needs and keep your policy in force for your beneficiaries. You may also be able to use the cash value as security for a loan from a financial institution.

2. Find out if your life insurance policy has an *accelerated death benefit*. An accelerated death benefit typically pays some of the policy's death benefit before the insured dies. It may be a way for you to get cash from a policy without selling it to a third party.

Consumer tips

- Comparison shop. Get quotes from several companies to make sure you have a competitive offer.
- Find out the tax implications. Not all proceeds received from the sale of your life insurance policy are tax free.
- It's important to know that any of your creditors could claim your cash settlement.
- Find out if you will lose any public assistance benefits such as food stamps or Medicaid if you get a cash settlement.
- The buyer of your policy can periodically ask you about your health status. The buyer is required to give you a privacy notice outlining who will get this personal information. Be sure to read it.
- Check all application forms for accuracy, especially your medical history. All questions must be answered truthfully and completely.
- Make sure the viatical settlement provider agrees to put your settlement proceeds into an independent escrow account to protect your funds during the transfer.
- Find out if you have the right to change your mind about the settlement AFTER you get the money. If so, how many days do you have to reconsider and return the money?