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Model #275

SUITABILITY IN ANNUITY TRANSACTIONS MODEL REGULATION

Table of Contents

Section 1.	Purpose
Section 2.	Scope
Section 3.	Authority
Section 4.	Exemptions
Section 5.	Definitions
Section 6.	Duties of Insurers and Insurance Producers
Section 7.	Insurance Producer Training
Section 8.	Compliance Mitigation; Penalties; <u>Enforcement</u>
Section 9.	{Optional} Recordkeeping
Section 10.	Effective Date
<u>Appendix A.</u>	<u>Insurance Agent (Producer) Disclosure For Annuities</u>
<u>Appendix B.</u>	<u>Consumer Refusal to Provide Information</u>
<u>Appendix C.</u>	<u>Consumer Decision to Purchase an Annuity Not Based on a Recommendation</u>

Section 1. Purpose

- A. The purpose of this regulation is to require producers, as defined in this regulation, to act in the best interest of the consumer when making a recommendation of an annuity and to require insurers to establish and maintain a system to supervise recommendations ~~and to set forth standards and procedures for recommendations to consumers that result in transactions involving annuity products~~ so that the insurance needs and financial objectives of consumers at the time of the transaction are ~~appropriately effectively~~ addressed.
- B. Nothing herein shall be construed to create or imply a private cause of action for a violation of this regulation or to subject a producer to civil liability under the best interest standard of care outlined in Section 6 of this regulation or under standards governing the conduct of a fiduciary or a fiduciary relationship.

Drafting Note: The language of subsection B comes from the NAIC Unfair Trade Practices Act. If a State has adopted different language, it should be substituted for subsection B.

Drafting Note: Section 989J of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010 (“Dodd-Frank Act”) specifically refers to this model regulation as the “Suitability in Annuity Transactions Model Regulation.” Section 989J of the Dodd-Frank Act confirmed this exemption of certain annuities from the Securities Act of 1933 and confirmed state regulatory authority. This regulation is a successor regulation that exceeds the requirements of the 2010 model regulation.

Section 2. Scope

This regulation shall apply to any sale or recommendation to purchase, exchange or replace of an annuity ~~made to a consumer by an insurance producer, or an insurer where no producer is involved, that results in the purchase, exchange or replacement recommended.~~

Section 3. Authority

This regulation is issued under the authority of [insert reference to enabling legislation].

Drafting Note: States may wish to use the Unfair Trade Practices Act as enabling legislation or may pass a law with specific authority to adopt this regulation.

Section 4. Exemptions

Unless otherwise specifically included, this regulation shall not apply to transactions involving:

- A. Direct response solicitations where there is no recommendation based on information collected from the consumer pursuant to this regulation;
- B. Contracts used to fund:
 - (1) An employee pension or welfare benefit plan that is covered by the Employee Retirement and Income Security Act (ERISA);
 - (2) A plan described by sections 401(a), 401(k), 403(b), 408(k) or 408(p) of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC), as amended, if established or maintained by an employer;
 - (3) A government or church plan defined in section 414 of the IRC, a government or church welfare benefit plan, or a deferred compensation plan of a state or local government or tax-exempt organization under section 457 of the IRC; or
 - (4) A nonqualified deferred compensation arrangement established or maintained by an employer or plan sponsor;
- ~~C.(5)~~ Settlements of or assumptions of liabilities associated with personal injury litigation or any dispute or claim resolution process; or
- ~~D.(6)~~ Formal prepaid funeral contracts.

Section 5. Definitions

- A. “Annuity” means an annuity that is an insurance product under State law that is individually solicited, whether the product is classified as an individual or group annuity.
- ~~B. “Cash compensation” means any discount, concession, fee, service fee, commission, sales charge, loan, override, or cash benefit received by a producer in connection with the recommendation or sale of an annuity from an insurer, intermediary, or directly from the consumer.~~
- ~~C. “Consumer profile information” means information that is reasonably appropriate to determine whether a recommendation addresses the consumer’s financial situation, insurance needs and financial objectives, including, at a minimum, the following:
 - ~~(1) Age;~~
 - ~~(2) Annual income;~~
 - ~~(3) Financial situation and needs, including debts and other obligations;~~
 - ~~(4) Financial experience;~~
 - ~~(5) Insurance needs;~~
 - ~~(6) Financial objectives;~~
 - ~~(7) Intended use of the annuity;~~
 - ~~(8) Financial time horizon;~~
 - ~~(9) Existing assets or financial products, including investment, annuity and insurance holdings;~~
 - ~~(10) Liquidity needs;~~~~

- (11) Liquid net worth;
- (12) Risk tolerance, including but not limited to, willingness to accept non-guaranteed elements in the annuity;
- (13) Financial resources used to fund the annuity; and
- (14) Tax status.
- ~~BD.~~ “Continuing education credit” or “CE credit” means one continuing education credit as defined in [insert reference in State law or regulations governing producer continuing education course approval].
- ~~CE.~~ “Continuing education provider” or “CE provider” means an individual or entity that is approved to offer continuing education courses pursuant to [insert reference in State law or regulations governing producer continuing education course approval].
- ~~DF.~~ “FINRA” means the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority or a succeeding agency.
- ~~EG.~~ “Insurer” means a company required to be licensed under the laws of this state to provide insurance products, including annuities.
- ~~F.~~ ~~“Insurance producer” means a person required to be licensed under the laws of this state to sell, solicit or negotiate insurance, including annuities.~~
- ~~H.~~ “Intermediary” means an entity contracted directly with an insurer or with another entity contracted with an insurer to facilitate the sale of the insurer’s annuities by producers.
- ~~I.~~ (1) ~~“Material conflict of interest” means a financial interest of the producer in the sale of an annuity that a reasonable person would expect to influence the impartiality of a recommendation.~~
- ~~(2) “Material conflict of interest” does not include cash compensation or non-cash compensation.~~
- ~~J.~~ “Non-cash compensation” means any form of compensation that is not cash compensation, including, but not limited to, health insurance, office rent, office support and retirement benefits.
- ~~K.~~ “Non-guaranteed elements” means the premiums, credited interest rates (including any bonus), benefits, values, dividends, non-interest based credits, charges or elements of formulas used to determine any of these, that are subject to company discretion and are not guaranteed at issue. An element is considered non-guaranteed if any of the underlying non-guaranteed elements are used in its calculation.
- ~~L.~~ ~~“Producer” means a person or entity required to be licensed under the laws of this state to sell, solicit or negotiate insurance, including annuities. For purposes of this regulation, “producer” includes an insurer where no producer is involved.~~
- ~~GM.~~ (1) ~~“Recommendation” means advice provided by an insurance a producer, or an insurer where no producer is involved, to an individual consumer that was intended to result or does result-results in a purchase, an exchange or a replacement of an annuity in accordance with that advice.~~
- ~~(2) Recommendation does not include general communication to the public, generalized customer services assistance or administrative support, general educational information and tools, prospectuses, or other product and sales material.~~
- ~~HN.~~ “Replacement” means a transaction in which a new ~~policy or contract~~annuity is to be purchased, and it is known or should be known to the proposing producer, or to the proposing insurer ~~if there is no~~whether or not a producer ~~is involved~~, that by reason of the transaction, an existing ~~annuity or other insurance policy or contract~~ has been or is to be any of the following:

- (1) Lapsed, forfeited, surrendered or partially surrendered, assigned to the replacing insurer or otherwise terminated;
- (2) Converted to reduced paid-up insurance, continued as extended term insurance, or otherwise reduced in value by the use of nonforfeiture benefits or other policy values;
- (3) Amended so as to effect either a reduction in benefits or in the term for which coverage would otherwise remain in force or for which benefits would be paid;
- (4) Reissued with any reduction in cash value; or
- (5) Used in a financed purchase.

Drafting Note: The definition of “replacement” above is derived from the NAIC Life Insurance and Annuities Replacement Model Regulation. If a State has a different definition for “replacement,” the State should either insert the text of that definition in place of the definition above or modify the definition above to provide a cross-reference to the definition of “replacement” that is in State law or regulation.

~~I. “Suitability information” means information that is reasonably appropriate to determine the suitability of a recommendation, including the following:~~

- ~~(1) Age;~~
- ~~(2) Annual income;~~
- ~~(3) Financial situation and needs, including the financial resources used for the funding of the annuity;~~
- ~~(4) Financial experience;~~
- ~~(5) Financial objectives;~~
- ~~(6) Intended use of the annuity;~~
- ~~(7) Financial time horizon;~~
- ~~(8) Existing assets, including investment and life insurance holdings;~~
- ~~(9) Liquidity needs;~~
- ~~(10) Liquid net worth;~~
- ~~(11) Risk tolerance; and~~
- ~~(12) Tax status.~~

~~O. “SEC” means the United States Securities and Exchange Commission.~~

Section 6. Duties of Insurers and ~~of Insurance~~ Producers

~~A. **Best Interest Obligations.** A producer, when making a recommendation of an annuity, shall act in the best interest of the consumer under the circumstances known at the time the recommendation is made, without placing the producer’s or the insurer’s financial interest ahead of the consumer’s interest. A producer has acted in the best interest of the consumer if they have satisfied the following obligations regarding care, disclosure, conflict of interest and documentation:~~

~~A. In recommending to a consumer the purchase of an annuity or the exchange of an annuity that results in another insurance transaction or series of insurance transactions, the insurance producer, or the insurer where no producer is involved, shall have reasonable grounds for believing that the recommendation is suitable for the consumer on the basis of the facts disclosed by the consumer as to his or her investments and other~~

~~insurance products and as to his or her financial situation and needs, including the consumer's suitability information, and that there is a reasonable basis to believe all of the following:~~

- ~~(1) (a) Care Obligation. The producer, in making a recommendation shall exercise reasonable diligence, care and skill to:
 - ~~(i) Know the consumer's financial situation, insurance needs and financial objectives;~~
 - ~~(ii) Understand the available recommendation options after making a reasonable inquiry into options available to the producer;~~
 - ~~(iii) Have a reasonable basis to believe the recommended option effectively addresses the consumer's financial situation, insurance needs and financial objectives over the life of the product, as evaluated in light of the consumer profile information; and~~
 - ~~(iv) Communicate the basis or bases of the recommendation.~~~~
- ~~(b) The requirements under subparagraph (a) of this paragraph include making reasonable efforts to obtain consumer profile information from the consumer prior to the recommendation of an annuity.~~
- ~~(c) The requirements under subparagraph (a) of this paragraph require a producer to consider the types of products the producer is authorized and licensed to recommend or sell that address the consumer's financial situation, insurance needs and financial objectives. This does not require analysis or consideration of any products outside the authority and license of the producer or other possible alternative products or strategies available in the market at the time of the recommendation. Producers shall be held to standards applicable to producers with similar authority and licensure.~~
- ~~(d) The requirements under this subsection do not create a fiduciary obligation or relationship and only create a regulatory obligation as established in this regulation.~~
- ~~(e) The consumer profile information, characteristics of the insurer, and product costs, rates, benefits and features are those factors generally relevant in making a determination whether an annuity effectively addresses the consumer's financial situation, insurance needs and financial objectives, but the level of importance of each factor under the care obligation of this paragraph may vary depending on the facts and circumstances of a particular case. However, each factor may not be considered in isolation.~~
- ~~(f) The requirements under subparagraph (a) of this paragraph include having a reasonable basis to believe the consumer would benefit from certain features of the annuity, such as annuitization, death or living benefit or other insurance-related features.~~
- ~~(g) The requirements under subparagraph (a) of this paragraph apply to the particular annuity as a whole and the underlying subaccounts to which funds are allocated at the time of purchase or exchange of an annuity, and riders and similar producer enhancements, if any.~~
- ~~(h) The requirements under subparagraph (a) of this paragraph do not mean the annuity with the lowest one-time or multiple occurrence compensation structure shall necessarily be recommended.~~
- ~~(i) The requirements under subparagraph (a) of this paragraph do not mean the producer has ongoing monitoring obligations under the care obligation under this paragraph, although such an obligation may be separately owed under the terms of a fiduciary, consulting, investment advising or financial planning agreement between the consumer and the producer.~~

- (j) In the case of an exchange or replacement of an annuity, the producer shall consider the whole transaction, which includes taking into consideration whether:
 - (i) The consumer will incur a surrender charge, be subject to the commencement of a new surrender period, lose existing benefits, such as death, living or other contractual benefits, or be subject to increased fees, investment advisory fees or charges for riders and similar product enhancements;
 - (ii) The replacing product would substantially benefit the consumer in comparison to the replaced product over the life of the product; and
 - (iii) The consumer has had another annuity exchange or replacement and, in particular, an exchange or replacement within the preceding 60 months.
- (k) Nothing in this regulation should be construed to require a producer to obtain any license other than a producer license with the appropriate line of authority to sell, solicit or negotiate insurance in this state, including but not limited to any securities license, in order to fulfill the duties and obligations contained in this regulation; provided the producer does not give advice or provide services that are otherwise subject to securities laws or engage in any other activity requiring other professional licenses.

(2) Disclosure obligation.

- (a) Prior to the recommendation or sale of an annuity, the producer shall prominently disclose to the consumer on a form substantially similar to Appendix A:
 - (i) A description of the scope and terms of the relationship with the consumer and the role of the producer in the transaction;
 - (ii) An affirmative statement on whether the producer is licensed and authorized to sell the following products:
 - (I) Fixed annuities;
 - (II) Fixed indexed annuities;
 - (III) Variable annuities;
 - (IV) Life insurance;
 - (V) Mutual funds;
 - (VI) Stocks and bonds; and
 - (VII) Certificates of deposit;
 - (iii) An affirmative statement describing the insurers the producer is authorized, contracted (or appointed), or otherwise able to sell insurance products for, using the following descriptions:
 - (I) One insurer;
 - (II) From two or more insurers; or
 - (III) From two or more insurers although primarily contracted with one insurer.
 - (iv) A description of the sources and types of cash compensation and non-cash compensation to be received by the producer, including whether the producer is

to be compensated for the sale of a recommended annuity by commission as part of premium or other remuneration received from the insurer, intermediary or other producer or by fee as a result of a contract for advice or consulting services; and

(v) A notice of the consumer's right to request additional information regarding cash compensation described in subparagraph (b) of this paragraph;

Drafting Note: If a state approves forms, a state should add language to subparagraph (a) reflecting such approvals.

(b) Upon request of the consumer or the consumer's designated representative, the producer shall disclose:

(i) A reasonable estimate of the amount of cash compensation to be received by the producer, which may be stated as a range of amounts or percentages; and

(ii) Whether the cash compensation is a one-time or multiple occurrence amount, and if a multiple occurrence amount, the frequency and amount of the occurrence, which may be stated as a range of amounts or percentages; and

(c) Prior to or at the time of the recommendation or sale of an annuity, the producer shall have a reasonable basis to believe ~~The~~ the consumer has been reasonably-informed of various features of the annuity, such as the potential surrender period and surrender charge, potential tax penalty if the consumer sells, exchanges, surrenders or annuitizes the annuity, mortality and expense fees, investment advisory fees, any annual fees, potential charges for and features of riders or other options of the annuity, limitations on interest returns, potential changes in non-guaranteed elements of the annuity, insurance and investment components and market risk;

Drafting Note: If a State has adopted the NAIC Annuity Disclosure Model Regulation, the State should insert an additional phrase in paragraph (1) subparagraph (c) above to explain that the requirements of this section are intended to supplement and not replace the disclosure requirements of the NAIC Annuity Disclosure Model Regulation.

~~(2) The consumer would benefit from certain features of the annuity, such as tax deferred growth, annuitization or death or living benefit;~~

~~(3) The particular annuity as a whole, the underlying subaccounts to which funds are allocated at the time of purchase or exchange of the annuity, and riders and similar product enhancements, if any, are suitable (and in the case of an exchange or replacement, the transaction as a whole is suitable) for the particular consumer based on his or her suitability information; and~~

~~(4) In the case of an exchange or replacement of an annuity, the exchange or replacement is suitable including taking into consideration whether:~~

~~(a) The consumer will incur a surrender charge, be subject to the commencement of a new surrender period, lose existing benefits (such as death, living or other contractual benefits), or be subject to increased fees, investment advisory fees or charges for riders and similar product enhancements;~~

~~(b) The consumer would benefit from product enhancements and improvements; and~~

~~(c) The consumer has had another annuity exchange or replacement and, in particular, an exchange or replacement within the preceding 36 months.~~

(3) Conflict of interest obligation. A producer shall identify and avoid or reasonably manage and disclose material conflicts of interest, including material conflicts of interest related to an ownership interest.

(4) Documentation obligation. A producer shall at the time of recommendation or sale:

- (a) Make a written record of any recommendation and the basis for the recommendation subject to this regulation;
- (b) Obtain a consumer signed statement on a form substantially similar to Appendix B documenting:
 - (i) A customer's refusal to provide the consumer profile information, if any; and
 - (ii) A customer's understanding of the ramifications of not providing his or her consumer profile information or providing insufficient consumer profile information; and
- (c) Obtain a consumer signed statement on a form substantially similar to Appendix C acknowledging the annuity transaction is not recommended if a customer decides to enter into an annuity transaction that is not based on the producer's recommendation.

Drafting Note: If a state approves forms, a state should add language to subparagraphs (b) and (c) of this paragraph reflecting such approvals.

~~B. Prior to the execution of a purchase, exchange or replacement of an annuity resulting from a recommendation, an insurance producer, or an insurer where no producer is involved, shall make reasonable efforts to obtain the consumer's suitability information.~~

~~C. Except as permitted under subsection D, an insurer shall not issue an annuity recommended to a consumer unless there is a reasonable basis to believe the annuity is suitable based on the consumer's suitability information.~~

(5) Application of the best interest obligation. Any requirement applicable to a producer under this subsection shall apply to every producer who has exercised material control or influence in the making of a recommendation and has received direct compensation as a result of the recommendation or sale, regardless of whether the producer has had any direct contact with the consumer. Activities such as providing or delivering marketing or educational materials, product wholesaling or other back office product support, and general supervision of a producer do not, in and of themselves, constitute material control or influence.

~~D.B.~~ Transactions not based on a recommendation.

- (1) Except as provided under paragraph (2) ~~of this subsection, neither an insurance~~^a ~~producer, nor an insurer,~~ shall have ~~any~~^{no} obligation to a consumer under subsection A ~~(1) or C~~ related to any annuity transaction if:
 - (a) No recommendation is made;
 - (b) A recommendation was made and was later found to have been prepared based on materially inaccurate information provided by the consumer;
 - (c) A consumer refuses to provide relevant ~~suitability~~^{consumer profile} information and the annuity transaction is not recommended; or
 - (d) A consumer decides to enter into an annuity transaction that is not based on a recommendation of ~~the insurer or the insurance~~ producer.
- (2) An insurer's issuance of an annuity subject to paragraph (1) shall be reasonable under all the circumstances actually known to the insurer at the time the annuity is issued.

C. Supervision system.

(1) Except as permitted under subsection B, an insurer may not issue an annuity recommended to a consumer unless there is a reasonable basis to believe the annuity would effectively address the particular consumer's financial situation, insurance needs and financial objectives based on the consumer's consumer profile information.

~~E. An insurance producer or, where no insurance producer is involved, the responsible insurer representative, shall at the time of sale:~~

~~(1) Make a record of any recommendation subject to section 6A of this regulation;~~

~~(2) Obtain a customer signed statement documenting a customer's refusal to provide suitability information, if any; and~~

~~(3) Obtain a customer signed statement acknowledging that an annuity transaction is not recommended if a customer decides to enter into an annuity transaction that is not based on the insurance producer's or insurer's recommendation.~~

~~F. (1)(2)~~ An insurer shall establish and maintain a supervision system that is reasonably designed to achieve the insurer's and its insurance producers' compliance with this regulation, including, but not limited to, the following:

(a) The insurer shall establish and maintain reasonable procedures to inform its insurance producers of the requirements of this regulation and shall incorporate the requirements of this regulation into relevant insurance-producer training manuals;

(b) The insurer shall establish and maintain standards for insurance-producer product training and shall establish and maintain reasonable procedures to require its insurance-producers to comply with the requirements of section 7 of this regulation;

(c) The insurer shall provide product-specific training and training materials which explain all material features of its annuity products to its insurance-producers;

(d) The insurer shall establish and maintain procedures for the review of each recommendation prior to issuance of an annuity that are designed to ensure that there is a reasonable basis to determine that a recommendation is suitablethe recommended annuity would effectively address the particular consumer's financial situation, insurance needs and financial objectives. Such review procedures may apply a screening system for the purpose of identifying selected transactions for additional review and may be accomplished electronically or through other means including, but not limited to, physical review. Such an electronic or other system may be designed to require additional review only of those transactions identified for additional review by the selection criteria;

(e) The insurer shall establish and maintain reasonable procedures to detect recommendations that are not suitable in compliance with subsections A, B, D and E. This may include, but is not limited to, confirmation of the consumer's suitabilityconsumer profile information, systematic customer surveys, producer and consumer interviews, confirmation letters, producer statements or attestations and programs of internal monitoring. Nothing in this subparagraph prevents an insurer from complying with this subparagraph by applying sampling procedures, or by confirming the suitabilityconsumer profile information or other required information under this section after issuance or delivery of the annuity; ~~and~~

(f) The insurer shall establish and maintain reasonable procedures to assess, prior to or upon issuance or delivery of an annuity, whether a producer has provided to the consumer the information required to be provided under this section;

(g) The insurer shall establish and maintain reasonable procedures to identify and address suspicious consumer refusals to provide consumer profile information;

- ~~(h)~~ The insurer shall establish and maintain reasonable procedures to identify and eliminate any sales contests, sales quotas, bonuses, and non-cash compensation that are based on the sales of specific annuities within a limited period of time. The requirements of this subparagraph are not intended to prohibit the receipt of health insurance, office rent, office support, retirement benefits or other employee benefits by employees as long as those benefits are not based upon the volume of sales of a specific annuity within a limited period of time; and

Drafting Note: The intent of this subparagraph (h) is to prohibit sales contests, sales quotas, bonuses and non-cash compensation based on the sale of a particular product within a limited period of time, but not to prohibit general incentives regarding the sales of a company's products with no emphasis on any particular product.

- ~~(i)~~ (i) The insurer shall annually provide a written report to senior management, including to the senior manager responsible for audit functions, which details a review, with appropriate testing, reasonably designed to determine the effectiveness of the supervision system, the exceptions found, and corrective action taken or recommended, if any.

- ~~(2)(3)~~ (a) Nothing in this subsection restricts an insurer from contracting for performance of a function (including maintenance of procedures) required under ~~paragraph (1)~~this subsection. An insurer is responsible for taking appropriate corrective action and may be subject to sanctions and penalties pursuant to section 8 of this regulation regardless of whether the insurer contracts for performance of a function and regardless of the insurer's compliance with subparagraph (b) of this paragraph.

- (b) An insurer's supervision system under ~~paragraph (1)~~this subsection shall include supervision of contractual performance under this subsection. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- (i) Monitoring and, as appropriate, conducting audits to assure that the contracted function is properly performed; and
- (ii) Annually obtaining a certification from a senior manager who has responsibility for the contracted function that the manager has a reasonable basis to represent, and does represent, that the function is properly performed.

~~(3)(4)~~ An insurer is not required to include in its system of supervision ~~an insurance:~~

~~(a)~~ A producer's recommendations to consumers of products other than the annuities offered by the insurer; or

~~(b)~~ Include consideration of or comparison to options available to the producer or compensation relating to those options other than annuities or other products offered by the insurer.

~~GD.~~ Prohibited Practices. Neither a producer nor an insurer shall ~~An insurance producer shall not~~ dissuade, or attempt to dissuade, a consumer from:

- (1) Truthfully responding to an insurer's request for confirmation of ~~the suitability~~consumer profile information;
- (2) Filing a complaint; or
- (3) Cooperating with the investigation of a complaint.

~~HE.~~ Safe harbor.

- (1) ~~Recommendations and sales of annuities~~Sales made in compliance with comparable standards ~~FINRA requirements pertaining to suitability and supervision of annuity transactions~~ shall satisfy

the requirements under this regulation. This subsection applies to ~~FINRA broker-dealer~~ all recommendations and sales of annuities made by financial professionals in compliance with business rules, controls and procedures that satisfy a comparable standard even if such standard would not otherwise apply to the product or recommendation at issue if the suitability and supervision is similar to those applied to variable annuity sales. However, nothing in this subsection shall limit the insurance commissioner's ability to investigate and enforce ~~(including investigate)~~ the provisions of this regulation.

Drafting Note: Non-compliance with comparable standards ~~FINRA requirements~~ means that the ~~broker-dealer transaction recommendation or sale~~ is subject to compliance with the suitability requirements of this regulation.

~~(2)~~ Nothing in paragraph (1) shall limit the insurer's obligation to comply with Section 6C(1) of this regulation, although the insurer may base its analysis on information received from either the financial professional or the entity supervising the financial professional.

~~(2)~~(3) For paragraph (1) to apply, an insurer shall:

- (a) Monitor the ~~FINRA member broker-dealer~~ relevant conduct of the financial professional seeking to rely on paragraph (1) or the entity responsible for supervising the financial professional, such as the financial professional's broker-dealer or an investment adviser registered under federal [or state] securities laws using information collected in the normal course of an insurer's business; and
- (b) Provide to the ~~FINRA member broker-dealer~~ entity responsible for supervising the financial professional seeking to rely on paragraph (1), such as the financial professional's broker-dealer or investment adviser registered under federal [or state] securities laws, information and reports that are reasonably appropriate to assist ~~the FINRA member broker-dealer~~ such entity to maintain its supervision system.

~~(4)~~ For purposes of this subsection, "financial professional" means a producer that is regulated and acting as:

- ~~(a)~~ A broker-dealer registered under federal [or state] securities laws or a registered representative of a broker-dealer;
- ~~(b)~~ An investment adviser registered under federal [or state] securities laws or an investment adviser representative associated with the federal [or state] registered investment adviser;
or
- ~~(c)~~ A plan fiduciary under Section 3(21) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) or fiduciary under Section 4975(e)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC) or any amendments or successor statutes thereto.

Drafting Note: The requirement that a producer be "regulated and acting" as a broker-dealer, an registered representative of a broker-dealer, an investment adviser, an investment adviser representative or a plan fiduciary means that a producer who is not explicitly acting in compliance with the relevant comparable standards, as specified in paragraph (4) below, is not eligible for this safe harbor and is subject to compliance with the requirements of this regulation.

~~(5)~~ For purposes of this subsection, "comparable standards" means:

- ~~(a)~~ With respect to broker-dealers and registered representatives of broker-dealers, applicable SEC and FINRA rules pertaining to best interest obligations and supervision of annuity recommendations and sales, including, but not limited to, Regulation Best Interest and any amendments or successor regulations thereto;
- ~~(b)~~ With respect to investment advisers registered under federal [or state] securities laws or investment adviser representatives, the fiduciary duties and all other requirements imposed on such investment advisers or investment adviser representatives by contract or under the

Investment Advisers Act of 1940 [for applicable state securities law], including but not limited to, the Form ADV and interpretations; and

Drafting Note: State-registered investment advisers in this safe harbor are included in brackets so that each individual state that implements this model regulation may determine whether to include the state-regulated investment advisers. Given the varying treatment of annuities, particularly variable annuities, under state law, the varying structures of state securities and insurance departments, and the varying levels of cooperation between the two agencies, this is a decision best made in each individual state.

(c) ~~With respect to plan fiduciaries or fiduciaries, means the duties, obligations, prohibitions and all other requirements attendant to such status under ERISA or the IRC and any amendments or successor statutes thereto.~~

Section 7. ~~Insurance~~-Producer Training

- A. ~~An insurance~~A producer shall not solicit the sale of an annuity product unless the ~~insurance~~-producer has adequate knowledge of the product to recommend the annuity and the ~~insurance~~-producer is in compliance with the insurer's standards for product training. ~~An insurance~~A producer may rely on insurer-provided product-specific training standards and materials to comply with this subsection.
- B. (1) (a) ~~An insurance~~A producer who engages in the sale of annuity products shall complete a one-time four (4) credit training course approved by the department of insurance and provided by the department of insurance-approved education provider.
- (b) ~~Insurance~~pProducers who hold a life insurance line of authority on the effective date of this regulation and who desire to sell annuities shall complete the requirements of this subsection within six (6) months after the effective date of this regulation. Individuals who obtain a life insurance line of authority on or after the effective date of this regulation may not engage in the sale of annuities until the annuity training course required under this subsection has been completed.
- (2) The minimum length of the training required under this subsection shall be sufficient to qualify for at least four (4) CE credits, but may be longer.
- (3) The training required under this subsection shall include information on the following topics:
- (a) The types of annuities and various classifications of annuities;
 - (b) Identification of the parties to an annuity;
 - (c) How product specific annuity contract features affect consumers;
 - (d) The application of income taxation of qualified and non-qualified annuities;
 - (e) The primary uses of annuities; and
 - (f) Appropriate standard of conduct, sales practices, replacement and disclosure requirements.
- (4) Providers of courses intended to comply with this subsection shall cover all topics listed in the prescribed outline and shall not present any marketing information or provide training on sales techniques or provide specific information about a particular insurer's products. Additional topics may be offered in conjunction with and in addition to the required outline.
- (5) A provider of an annuity training course intended to comply with this subsection shall register as a CE provider in this State and comply with the rules and guidelines applicable to ~~insurance~~-producer continuing education courses as set forth in [insert reference to State law or regulations governing producer continuing education course approval].

- ~~(6)~~ A producer who has completed an annuity training course approved by the department of insurance prior to [insert effective date of amended regulation] shall, within six (6) months after [insert effective date of amended regulation], complete either:
- (a) A new four (4) credit training course approved by the department of insurance after [insert effective date of amended regulation]; or
- (b) An additional one-time one (1) credit training course approved by the department of insurance and provided by the department of insurance-approved education provider on appropriate sales practices, replacement and disclosure requirements under this amended regulation.
- ~~(6)~~(7) Annuity training courses may be conducted and completed by classroom or self-study methods in accordance with [insert reference to State law or regulations governing producer continuing education course approval].
- ~~(7)~~(8) Providers of annuity training shall comply with the reporting requirements and shall issue certificates of completion in accordance with [insert reference to State law or regulations governing to producer continuing education course approval].
- ~~(8)~~(9) The satisfaction of the training requirements of another State that are substantially similar to the provisions of this subsection shall be deemed to satisfy the training requirements of this subsection in this State.
- ~~(10)~~ The satisfaction of the components of the training requirements of any course or courses with components substantially similar to the provisions of this subsection shall be deemed to satisfy the training requirements of this subsection in this state.
- ~~(9)~~(11) An insurer shall verify that ~~an insurancee~~ a producer has completed the annuity training course required under this subsection before allowing the producer to sell an annuity product for that insurer. An insurer may satisfy its responsibility under this subsection by obtaining certificates of completion of the training course or obtaining reports provided by commissioner-sponsored database systems or vendors or from a reasonably reliable commercial database vendor that has a reporting arrangement with approved insurance education providers.

Section 8. Compliance Mitigation; Penalties; Enforcement

- A. An insurer is responsible for compliance with this regulation. If a violation occurs, either because of the action or inaction of the insurer or its ~~insurance~~ producer, the commissioner may order:
- (1) An insurer to take reasonably appropriate corrective action for any consumer harmed by a failure to comply with this regulation by the insurer~~’s~~insurer, an entity contracted to perform the insurer’s supervisory duties or by ~~its insurance producer’s, violation of this regulation~~the producer;
- (2) A general agency, independent agency or the ~~insurance~~ producer to take reasonably appropriate corrective action for any consumer harmed by the ~~insurance~~ producer’s violation of this regulation; and
- (3) Appropriate penalties and sanctions.
- B. Any applicable penalty under [insert statutory citation] for a violation of this regulation may be reduced or eliminated [, according to a schedule adopted by the commissioner,] if corrective action for the consumer was taken promptly after a violation was discovered or the violation was not part of a pattern or practice.

Drafting Note: Subsection B above is intended to be consistent with the commissioner’s discretionary authority to determine the appropriate penalty for a violation of this regulation. The language of subsection B is not intended to require that a commissioner impose a penalty on an insurer for a single violation of this regulation if the commissioner has determined that such a penalty is not appropriate.

Drafting Note: A State that has authority to adopt a schedule of penalties may wish to include the words in brackets. In that case, “shall” should be substituted for “may” in the same sentence. States should consider inserting a reference to the NAIC Unfair Trade Practices Act or the State’s statute that authorizes the commissioner to impose penalties and fines.

C. The authority to enforce compliance with this regulation is vested exclusively with the commissioner.

Section 9. ~~{Optional}~~ Recordkeeping

- A. Insurers, general agents, independent agencies and ~~insurance~~-producers shall maintain or be able to make available to the commissioner records of the information collected from the consumer, disclosures made to the consumer, including summaries of oral disclosures, and other information used in making the recommendations that were the basis for insurance transactions for [insert number] years after the insurance transaction is completed by the insurer. An insurer is permitted, but shall not be required, to maintain documentation on behalf of ~~an insurance~~ producer.

Drafting Note: States should review their current record retention laws and specify a time period that is consistent with those laws. For some States this time period may be five (5) years.

- B. Records required to be maintained by this regulation may be maintained in paper, photographic, micro-process, magnetic, mechanical or electronic media or by any process that accurately reproduces the actual document.

Drafting Note: This section may be unnecessary in States that have a comprehensive recordkeeping law or regulation.

Section 10. Effective Date

The amendments to this regulation shall take effect ~~[six (6)]~~X months after the date the regulation is adopted or on [insert date], whichever is later.

APPENDIX A

INSURANCE AGENT (PRODUCER) DISCLOSURE FOR ANNUITIES
Do Not Sign Unless You Have Read and Understand the Information in this Form

Date: _____

INSURANCE AGENT (PRODUCER) INFORMATION (“Me”, “I”, “My”)

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Business\Agency Name: _____ Website: _____

Business Mailing Address: _____

Business Telephone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

National Producer Number in [state]: _____

CUSTOMER INFORMATION (“You”, “Your”)

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

What Types of Products Can I Sell You?

I am licensed to sell annuities to you in accordance with state law. If I recommend that You buy an annuity, it means I believe that it effectively meets Your financial situation, insurance needs, and financial objectives. Other financial products, such as life insurance or stocks, bonds and mutual funds, also may meet Your needs.

I offer the following products:

- Fixed or Fixed Indexed Annuities
- Variable Annuities
- Life Insurance

I need a separate license to provide advice about or to sell non-insurance financial products. I have checked below any non-insurance financial products that I am licensed and authorized to provide advice about or to sell.

- Mutual Funds
- Stocks/Bonds
- Certificates of Deposits

Whose Annuities Can I Sell to You?

I am authorized to sell:

<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Annuities from Only One (1) Insurer</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Annuities from Two or More Insurers</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Annuities from Two or More Insurers although I primarily sell annuities from: _____</u>	

How I'm Paid for My Work:

It's important for You to understand how I'm paid for my work. Depending on the particular annuity You purchase, I may be paid a commission or a fee. Commissions are generally paid to Me by the insurance company while fees are generally paid to Me by the consumer. If You have questions about how I'm paid, please ask Me.

Depending on the particular annuity You buy, I will or may be paid cash compensation as follows:

- Commission, which is usually paid by the insurance company or other sources. If other sources, describe:
_____.
- Fees (such as a fixed amount, an hourly rate, or a percentage of your payment), which are usually paid directly by the customer.
- Other (Describe): _____.

If you have questions about the above compensation I will be paid for this transaction, please ask me.

I may also receive other indirect compensation resulting from this transaction (sometimes called "non-cash" compensation), such as health or retirement benefits, office rent and support, or other incentives from the insurance company or other sources.

Drafting Note: This disclosure may be adapted to fit the particular business model of the producer. As an example, if the producer only receives commission or only receives a fee from the consumer, the disclosure may be refined to fit that particular situation. This form is intended to provide an example of how to communicate producer compensation, but compliance with the regulation may also be achieved with more precise disclosure, including a written consulting, advising or financial planning agreement.

Drafting Note: The acknowledgement and signature should be in immediate proximity to the disclosure language.

By signing below, you acknowledge that you have read and understand the information provided to you in this document.

Customer Signature

Date

Agent (Producer) Signature

Date

APPENDIX B

CONSUMER REFUSAL TO PROVIDE INFORMATION

Do Not Sign Unless You Have Read and Understand the Information in this Form

Why are you being given this form?

You're buying a financial product – an annuity.

To recommend a product that effectively meets your needs, objectives and situation, the agent, broker, or company needs information about you, your financial situation, insurance needs and financial objectives.

If you sign this form, it means you have not given the agent, broker, or company some or all the information needed to decide if the annuity effectively meets your needs, objectives and situation. You may lose protections under the Insurance Code of [this state] if you sign this form or provide inaccurate information.

Statement of Purchaser:

- I REFUSE to provide this information at this time.
- I have chosen to provide LIMITED information at this time.

Customer Signature

Date

APPENDIX C

Consumer Decision to Purchase an Annuity NOT Based on a Recommendation

Do Not Sign This Form Unless You Have Read and Understand It.

Why are you being given this form? You are buying a financial product – an annuity.

To recommend a product that effectively meets your needs, objectives and situation, the agent, broker, or company has the responsibility to learn about you, your financial situation, insurance needs and financial objectives.

If you sign this form, it means you know that you're buying an annuity that was not recommended.

Statement of Purchaser:

I understand that I am buying an annuity, but the agent, broker or company did not recommend that I buy it. If I buy it **without a recommendation**, I understand I may lose protections under the Insurance Code of [this state].

Customer Signature

Date

Agent/Producer Signature

Date

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Project History

SUITABILITY IN ANNUITY TRANSACTIONS MODEL REGULATION (#275)

1. Description of the Project, Issues Addressed, etc.

In 2017, the Life Insurance and Annuities (A) Committee established the Annuity Suitability (A) Working Group and charged the Working Group to review and revise, as necessary, the *Suitability in Annuity Transactions Model Regulation* (#275) and as part of that charge, consider how to promote greater uniformity across NAIC-member jurisdictions. The Committee adopted the charge and established the Working Group, in part, in response to the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) fiduciary rule, which was finalized in April 2016 but vacated in its entirety in March 2018. The DOL fiduciary rule would have expanded the scope of who is considered a fiduciary to federal Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) retirement plans and individual retirement accounts (IRAs) to include a broader set of insurance agents, insurance brokers and insurers. Separately, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) released a proposed rule package in May 2018, which included Regulation Best Interest (Reg BI). The SEC finalized Reg BI in June 2019. The final Reg BI establishes a best interest standard of conduct for broker-dealers beyond the existing suitability obligation. The new standard of conduct requires a broker-dealer when making a recommendation of any securities transaction or investment strategy involving securities to a retail customer to act in the best interest of the retail customer at the time a recommendation is made without placing the financial or other interest of the broker-dealer or associated persons ahead of the interest of the retail customers.

While acknowledging the SEC's and the DOL's role in the regulatory landscape and believing that consumers are better protected when, to the extent possible, there is harmonization of the regulations enforced by the states, the SEC and the DOL, the Working Group continued its work to draft revisions to Model #275 to establish a framework for an enhanced standard of conduct that is more than the model's current suitability standard but not a fiduciary standard.

In 2018, the Working Group held two two-day interim meetings—one in June in Kansas City, MO, and one in October in Chicago—to discuss drafts of proposed revisions to Model #275. Additionally, the Working Group held several conference calls and additional in-person meetings at each national meeting.

After the SEC finalized its Reg BI in June 2019, as directed by the Life Insurance and Annuities (A) Committee at the 2019 Spring National Meeting, the Working Group met soon after in mid-June during an in-person interim meeting in Columbus, OH, to level set and work toward its goal of fleshing out the meaning of "best interest" and incorporating a best interest standard of conduct into the Model #275 revisions. During its June meeting, the Working Group discussed and agreed on a framework for the model revisions to include a best interest standard and a path forward for completing its work as soon as possible.

Based on this framework, the Working Group developed a draft of proposed model revisions including a best interest standard of care a producer or insurer can meet if the producer or insurer satisfies the four obligations under this standard of care: 1) the care obligation; 2) disclosure obligation; 3) material conflict of interest obligation; and 4) documentation obligation. The Working Group exposed the draft for public comment until Sept. 30, 2019.

The Working Group met Oct. 8, Oct. 15, Oct. 29 and Nov. 5, 2019, via conference call to discuss the comments received. The Working Group received comments from many stakeholders, including industry, consumers and producers. More than 100 interested parties and state insurance regulators participated in each of the conference calls. The Working Group adopted the proposed revisions to Model #275 on Nov. 5, 2019, via conference call. The Working Group agreed that it had completed its work as directed by the Life Insurance and Annuities (A) Committee during the 2019 Spring National Meeting and forwarded the draft to the Committee for its consideration. The Committee chair exposed the draft for a public comment period ending Nov. 26, 2019. At the 2019 Fall National Meeting, the Committee discussed the comments received and made some revisions to the Working Group's draft of proposed revisions to Model #275. During this meeting, the Committee provided preliminary approval to the proposed Model #275 revisions. The Committee also directed the Working Group to discuss the comments received on the proposed appendices during a meeting following the 2019 Fall National Meeting. The Working Group met Dec. 19, 2019, via conference call to discuss the Nov. 26, 2019, comments received on the proposed appendices. During this meeting, the Working Group revised the appendices and forwarded its work to the Committee for its consideration. The Committee met Dec. 30, 2019, via conference call to consider adoption of the proposed revisions to Model #275. The Committee adopted the proposed revisions to Model #275 by a vote of 11 to 1.

The proposed revisions establish a best interest standard of conduct for producers and insurers. This new standard of conduct is more than the model's current suitability standard, but it is not a fiduciary standard. Under this new standard of conduct,

when making a recommendation of an annuity, a producer or insurer shall act in the best interest of the consumer under the circumstances known at the time the recommendation is made, without placing the producer's or the insurer's financial interest ahead of the consumer's financial interest. To satisfy this best interest obligation, a producer or an insurer must satisfy the four obligations: 1) care; 2) disclosure; 3) conflict of interest; and 4) documentation. The proposed revisions also revise the model's current insurer supervision requirements, including a new supervision requirement for the insurer to establish and maintain reasonable procedures to identify and eliminate certain sales incentives that are based on sales of specific annuities within a limited period of time. The proposed revisions also expand the model's current safe harbor provisions to apply the safe harbor to any financial professional in compliance with business rules, controls and procedures that satisfy a comparable standard, such as Reg BI, to the model's new standard of conduct. The proposed revisions define a financial professional to include a producer that is regulated and acting as: 1) a broker-dealer; 2) an investment adviser; or 3) a plan fiduciary. The proposed revisions also include new appendices to provide guidance to producers and insurers in satisfying the new disclosure and documentation obligations.

2. Name of Group Responsible for Drafting the Model and States Participating

The Annuity Suitability (A) Working Group of the Life Insurance and Annuities (A) Committee drafted the proposed revisions to Model #275. The members of the Working Group were: Alabama, California, Delaware, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Tennessee and Wisconsin. Idaho chaired the Working Group in 2017 and 2018, and Ohio chaired the Working Group in 2019. The Life Insurance and Annuities (A) Committee also discussed and drafted proposed revisions to Model #275 after the Working Group completed its work. The members of the Committee were: Alabama, Arizona, Delaware, District of Columbia, Idaho, Iowa, Louisiana, Nebraska, Nevada, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Puerto Rico, Tennessee and Wisconsin.

3. Project Authorized by What Charge and Date First Given to the Group

The Life Insurance and Annuities (A) Committee established the Annuity Suitability (A) Working Group in 2017 to carry out the charge below:

“Review and revise, as necessary, the *Suitability in Annuity Transactions Model Regulation* (#275) and consider how to promote greater uniformity across NAIC-member jurisdictions.”

4. A General Description of the Drafting Process (e.g., drafted by a subgroup, interested parties, the full group, etc.; include any parties outside the members that participated)

Beginning in March 2017 and ending in December 2019, the Working Group reviewed and discussed all of the comments received as part of the drafting process. Numerous interested parties participated in the process. The interested parties represented all stakeholder groups, including consumers, insurers and producer representatives. Each draft of proposed revisions was posted to the Working Group's web page and the Committee's web page on the NAIC website. All comment letters received also were posted. The Working Group held open in-person interim meetings and met via conference call during the drafting process. The Working Group also met in person at each NAIC national meeting.

5. A General Description of the Due Process (e.g., exposure periods, public hearings or any other means by which widespread input from industry, consumers and legislators was solicited)

Beginning in March 2017 and ending in December 2019, the Working Group reviewed and discussed all of the comments received. Numerous interested parties participated in the drafting process. The interested parties represented all stakeholder groups, including consumers, insurers and producer representatives. Each draft of proposed revisions was posted to the Working Group's web page and the Committee's web page on the NAIC website. All comment letters received also were posted. The Working Group held open in-person interim meetings and met via conference call during the drafting process. The Working Group also met in person at each NAIC national meeting.

6. A Discussion of the Significant Issues (items of some controversy raised during the drafting process and the group's response)

Several significant issues were raised throughout the drafting process. Those issues included: 1) expanding Model #275 to include investment-type life insurance products; 2) specifically applying the proposed revisions to in-force annuity products; 3) applying the proposed revisions to producers who may not have direct contact with the consumer, but participated in a material way to developing and making the recommendation purchase an annuity; and 4) including the drafting note stating that the proposed model revisions are a successor to the 2010 model revisions.

With respect to expanding Model #275 to include investment-type life insurance products, the Working Group discussed this issue during one of its first in-person interim meetings. The Working Group decided that given its charge to “review and revise, as necessary, the *Suitability in Annuity Transactions Model Regulation* (#275) and consider how to promote greater uniformity across NAIC-member jurisdictions,” expanding Model #275 to include investment-type life insurance products was beyond the scope of its charge. The Working Group concluded that the Life Insurance and Annuities (A) Committee was the appropriate forum for raising and considering this issue.

Another significant issue discussed was whether the model revisions should specifically apply to in-force annuity contracts. The Working Group discussed this issue extensively during multiple meetings. It decided ultimately not to include language in the proposed revisions specifically applying to in-force annuity contracts. However, during these discussions, it was suggested that in certain situations, in making a recommendation, a producer or insurer would have to and would be expected to consider a consumer’s existing insurance products, including annuities, to determine whether the recommended option effectively addresses the consumer’s financial situation, insurance needs and financial objectives as part of satisfying the best interest standard of conduct.

The Working Group also extensively discussed whether the model revisions should apply to producers not having direct contact with a consumer, but exercised material control or influence in the making of the recommendation. The Working Group decided to add language applying the model revisions to such producers under certain circumstances. Specifically, in Section 6A(5), the model revisions provide that any requirement applicable to a producer under Section 6—Duties of Insurers and Producers applies to every producer who has exercised material control or influence in the making of a recommendation and has received direct compensation as a result of the recommendation or sale regardless of whether the producer has had any direct contact with the consumer.

Another issue the Working Group discussed was whether the revised model establishing the new best interest standard of conduct would be considered for purposes of Section 989J of the federal Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010 (Dodd-Frank Act) a successor to the 2010 model revisions, which established the suitability standard of conduct. The proposed revisions include a drafting note in Section 1—Purpose expressly stating the proposed revisions are a successor to the 2010 model revisions. The Working Group deferred the issue to the NAIC Legal Division for additional research. The NAIC Legal Division did not expressly provide an opinion, but initial research found that with or without the Section 1 drafting note, the revised model most likely would be considered a successor to the 2010 model. The Working Group determined that this was a policy issue for the Committee, the Executive (EX) Committee and Plenary to decide. The model revisions, as adopted by the Committee, retain the proposed drafting note.

7. Any Other Important Information (e.g., amending an accreditation standard)

None.