

USING LIFE INSURANCE FOR PENSION MAXIMIZATION

Help your clients
capitalize on their
pension plans

Agent Guide



North American Company
for Life and Health Insurance
Since 1886

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Help Your Clients Obtain Financial Protection and Maximize Their Pension

Pension maximization using life insurance is a way to help your clients gain death benefit protection while offering an opportunity to maximize pension benefits. For public school employees, state and local government workers, and for those with companies that offer defined benefit pension plans, there is an important decision to make when it comes time to select the type of benefit they will receive. The choice generally is between two options: **Life Only** benefit or **Joint and Survivor** benefit.

The **Life Only** benefit provides the plan participant with the maximum lifetime benefit. This higher benefit payment however has one disadvantage: once the plan participant passes away, the benefit stops, leaving nothing for the surviving spouse. With the **Joint and Survivor** option, the participant receives a lower benefit, but when the plan participant dies, the spouse continues to receive a pension benefit.

The Joint and Survivor option offers guaranteed income for the spouse, but if the spouse were to die prematurely, the plan participant is left with a reduced benefit for life. Additionally, pension plans generally don't provide heirs with a benefit when the plan participant dies. The pension maximization strategy provides a compromise between these two options and may be a viable solution.

A Close Look at Pension Maximization

Why Life Insurance for Pension Maximization?

- Key advantages
- Items to consider

How it Works

Illustration Software Tips

Client Profile

A Close Look at Pension Maximization

Pension maximization is a strategy to gain death benefit protection and to help get the most out of defined pension plans. With this strategy, a life insurance policy is purchased on the life of the plan participant prior to retirement. It may be purchased closer to retirement, but because of age and possible health issues, purchasing the policy sooner may be in the client's best interests. The participant's spouse is named as the beneficiary of the life insurance policy.

The life insurance policy's death benefit would seek to match an amount that would replace the benefits for the surviving spouse as if the Joint and Survivor benefit option was selected. At retirement, the plan participant selects the Life Only benefit option in order to receive the larger benefit amount.

With the larger benefit, the participant may use a portion of the pension benefits to pay the life insurance premiums. The goal is to provide the spouse with the same benefit amount as if he or she elected the Joint and Survivor benefit option while the extra funds not used for insurance provides the plan participant with a larger, "max" pension benefit.

When the plan participant dies, the life insurance death benefit is paid to the spouse generally income tax free.¹ The death benefit can then be used to replace the lost pension income as a result of the plan participant's death. This can be accomplished through taking the death benefit as a life settlement option, using the death benefit to purchase an immediate annuity, or using other savings vehicles.

Using life insurance for pension maximization continues to be a strong strategy with the number of teachers, government employees, and state and city workers. Consider the strategy for married individuals who participate in defined benefit pension plans and are comfortable using a portion of their pension benefit to fund a life insurance policy.

Why Life Insurance for Pension Maximization?

Using life insurance for pension maximization has several advantages and a few items to consider.

Key advantages

- **Immediate death benefit protection.** Your clients can gain peace of mind from the start with death benefit protection should the plan participant die before retirement or soon after retirement.
- **Maximum pension income.** By selecting the Life Only option, the plan participant receives a larger benefit. Should the spouse die first, the participant isn't left with a reduced benefit should he or she have chosen the Joint and Survivor option. Under this scenario, the participant may also access his or her permanent life insurance policy's cash values through loans or withdrawals^{2,3} to supplement retirement income.
- **Death benefit for plan participant's spouse.** When the plan participant dies, the spouse receives the life insurance policy's death benefit generally income tax free,¹ which replaces the discontinued pension income.
- **Possible inheritance for heirs.** If the spouse predeceases the pension holder and the policy is kept in force until the pension holder's death, the policy's death benefit would pass to heirs.

Items to consider

- **Possible loss of spousal benefits.** With some pension plans, selecting the Life Only option may disqualify the plan participant's spouse from medical or other benefits that may be provided with the Joint and Survivor option. Be sure your clients consult with their benefit administrator to ensure they don't lose other valuable benefits without thorough contemplation of their worth versus the benefit of pension maximization.
- **Lapse of life insurance policy.** It is exceedingly important to keep the life insurance policy in force. Purchasing a guaranteed death benefit product may reduce the risk of lapse. There is no guarantee that the owner can pay the premiums, but a guaranteed death benefit product will remain in force when premium requirements are met.
- **Inadequate death benefit amount.** If the life insurance death benefit amount is inadequate, the spouse will not have enough to meet financial needs. Consider a highly conservative approach where the plan participant dies soon after retirement. Establish the death benefit amount on that scenario so that it will provide income for the life of the spouse.
 - If the plan is to allocate the death benefit to a saving vehicle to provide income for the spouse, the death benefit may be inadequate if the assumed interest earned on the death benefit is too high. Consider basing the rate of return very conservatively similar to low-risk investments like CDs, bonds, and money market accounts.
- **Reducing the death benefit.** Consider reducing the death benefit of the life insurance policy as the amount needed to guarantee the income stream reduces. As the surviving spouse ages, it will take less death benefit to produce this income stream. Reducing death benefit will lower the premium requirements, which can provide a larger pension maximization benefit. However, it's important to make sure that the client is aware of the planned decreases in the death benefit so that these changes can be made and the product performs as expected.

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- **Cost of living adjustment.** Some pension plans offer a cost of living adjustment to keep pace with inflation. If this is the case, a larger death benefit or a slower schedule of death benefit reductions may be required for the strategy to remain viable.
 - **Spouse may have little or no investment experience.** When the death benefit is paid, the spouse may not have the experience to help ensure the benefit will last, especially if it is paid in a lump sum. Consider a policy settlement option or an immediate annuity.
 - **Impact of taxes.**¹ Consider taxes in matching the spousal income. Identify the after tax benefit and try to match the after tax benefit with the life insurance. The life insurance death benefit is generally income tax free. This strategy provides more accuracy and requires a lower death benefit, which in turn means lower premium costs and a larger pension maximization benefit.



How It Works

Here are the steps to the pension maximization strategy using life insurance.

- 1.** The plan participant purchases a life insurance policy. The death benefit is based on the amount that would replace the spouse's benefits paid under the Joint and Survivor option.
- 2.** The plan participant chooses the Life Only benefit option at retirement rather than the Joint and Survivor option.
- 3.** Upon death of the plan participant, the life insurance death benefit is paid to the spouse. The pension benefits stop.
- 4.** The life insurance death benefit is used to replace the discontinued pension benefit. This may be done through a policy settlement option, using the death benefit to purchase an immediate annuity, or allocating the death benefit to a savings vehicle.

Illustration Software Tips

The North American Company Illustration Software (NACIS) can help you put together competitive pension maximization cases. Here are a few tips to consider when working on your cases.

- **How to calculate the life insurance amount.** Find the surviving spouse benefit if a Joint and Survivor option was taken. That amount represents the target monthly income for the spouse. Next, identify the lump sum required to generate that monthly income. To do that, run a single premium immediate annuity (SPIA) with no period certain, or use an alternate savings vehicle, to find the amount needed to generate that target income for the spouse's life. That single premium amount is the life insurance death benefit needed.
- **Decrease face amount.** The lower the cost of the insurance, the more money available for the retiree each month. One way to reduce the premium is to adjust the life insurance death benefits as needs drop. Since the life insurance is being used to supply an income stream for the surviving spouse, as the spouse gets older the funds needed will decrease. Search for the amount needed and adjust the coverage amount at regular intervals (at least every 10 years). For example, search for the spouse's single premium need (life insurance) at ages 65, 70, 75, 80, 85, and 90.
- **What if the pension includes an inflation factor?** Some pension plans offer an increasing benefit to help keep up with inflation as opposed to a level income stream. For pension plans with an inflation factor, consider not reducing the death benefit as the surviving spouse grows older. By not reducing the death benefit, the proceeds will be large enough to generate a larger income stream when the insurance is eventually needed. Solutions to generate the income stream may be adjusted to meet the spouse's needs at the time of death. That may involve an annuity with periodic withdrawals, a SPIA, or an alternate fund.

Client Profile

For the pension maximization strategy using life insurance, the candidate must participate in a defined benefit pension plan. The employer funds the defined benefit pension plan with the goal of providing income each month during the participant's retirement. For this strategy, the participant is ideally within five years of retirement, which may lower premium costs since the life insurance is based on age, gender, and health. Here you'll find common traits for clients seeking a pension maximization strategy using life insurance.

- Ages 50 to 65
- Married
- Either spouse has a defined benefit pension plan
- Considering retirement
- Seeking to maximize monthly income
- Are prepared for the potential impact caused by loss of benefits for the surviving spouse that may be linked to the Joint and Survivor option

Resources

Sales Development

Phone: (800) 800-3656, extension 10411

Email: salesupport@nacolah.com

Hours: 7:30 – 5:00 CST, Monday through Thursday;
7:30 - 12:30 Friday

¹ Neither North American Company for Life and Health Insurance nor its agents give legal or tax advice. Please advise your customers to consult with and rely on a qualified legal or tax advisor before entering into or paying additional premiums with respect to such arrangements.

² In some situations, loans and withdrawals may be subject to federal taxes. Clients should be instructed to consult with and rely on their own tax advisor or attorney for advice on their specific situation.

³ Income and growth on accumulated cash values is generally taxable only upon withdrawal. Adverse tax consequences may result if withdrawals exceed premiums paid into the policy. Withdrawals or surrenders made during a Surrender Charge period will be subject to surrender charges and may reduce the ultimate death benefit and cash value. Surrender charges vary by product, issue age, sex, underwriting class and policy year.



North American Company
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We're Here for Life®

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