



**STATE OF NEW YORK
INSURANCE DEPARTMENT
25 BEAVER STREET
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10004**

**Circular Letter No. 22 (1999)
June 1, 1999**

TO: All licensed life insurers, fraternal benefit societies, charitable annuity societies, property/casualty insurers, co-operative property/casualty insurers, financial guaranty insurers, mortgage guaranty insurers, accident and health insurers, Article 43 Corporations, Public Health Law Article 44 health maintenance organizations and integrated delivery systems, title insurers, the State Insurance Fund, the Medical Malpractice Insurance Association and municipal cooperative health benefit plans; all hereinafter referred to as "insurers".

RE: Suggested Best Practices Resulting From the Joint Department/Industry Working Groups on Form and Rate Filings

In May 1998, the New York Insurance Department convened three joint Department/Industry working groups, one each for the life, health and property insurance industries, to discuss ways in which to improve the Department's form and rate filing processes.

The working group meetings were productive. We were able to identify a number of best practices for insurers and a number of recommendations for the Department to adopt in order to improve our internal procedures and expedite the filing process.

Some of the best practices for insurers discussed at the meetings include:

- Meet with the Department early on in the product development process, especially for new and innovative products. This will allow insurers to address Department concerns while products are still in the development stage and will make our review more effective and timely.
- Submit complete, accurate and timely filings. In accordance with previously issued Circular Letters, filing submissions that are determined to be incomplete or inaccurate will be returned or closed.
- Submit filings in a format that readily allows for side-by-side comparison of all new language and changes, such as blacklined versions of previously approved filings.
- Respond to all Department comments and questions in a thorough and timely manner. In accordance with previously issued Circular Letters, the Department will close submission files if complete written responses are not received in a timely fashion.
- Make greater use of the expedited approval provision in Section 3201(b)(6) of the Insurance Law, where applicable and appropriate.

The recommendations for improving the Department's procedures in processing filings include:

- Hold meetings with insurance company representatives at the Department or via conference calls as needed to discuss product filing and rate matters.
- Clarify the Department's procedural and substantive filing requirements by creating and disseminating product outlines and/or checklists. Some product outlines and checklists are already completed and can be accessed at the Department's website.
- Expand and periodically update the material on the Department's website to assist in the form and rate filing process and to keep pace with substantive and procedural changes.
- Hold educational seminars for insurance company compliance personnel discussing the Department's procedures and requirements.

- Commit to transparency in the approval process.
- Commit to making greater use of technology, including electronic forms and rate filings, to expedite the filing and approval process.
- Commit to greater management oversight of, and involvement in the filing process.
- Commit to responding to insurers in a timely manner.
- Make approved forms more accessible to the public with viewing stations in Albany and New York City.
- Conduct periodic quality surveys of insurers to assess and improve the form and rate submission process.

The Department appreciates the efforts expended by the industry representatives who participated in the working groups. We are committed to implementing the recommendations, improving the rate and form filing process and being responsive to the insurance industry's need for timely approvals.

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