

Section 38 - Assignment and Transfer of Insurance Policies

Assignment or transfer of a policy should be in accordance with Section 38 of the Insurance Act, 1938 as amended from time to time. The extant provisions in this regard are as follows:

1. This policy may be transferred/assigned, wholly or in part, with or without consideration.
2. An Assignment may be effected in a policy by an endorsement upon the policy itself or by a separate instrument under notice to the Insurer.
3. The instrument of assignment should indicate the fact of transfer or assignment and the reasons for the assignment or transfer, antecedents of the assignee and terms on which assignment is made.
4. The assignment must be signed by the transferor or assignor or duly authorized agent and attested by at least one witness.
5. The transfer of assignment shall not be operative as against an insurer until a notice in writing of the transfer or assignment and either the said endorsement or instrument itself or copy thereof certified to be correct by both transferor and transferee or their duly authorized agents have been delivered to the insurer.
6. Fee to be paid for assignment or transfer can be specified by the Authority through Regulations.
7. On receipt of notice with fee, the insurer should Grant a written acknowledgement of receipt of notice. Such notice shall be conclusive evidence against the insurer of duly receiving the notice.
8. If the insurer maintains one or more places of business, such notices shall be delivered only at the place where the policy is being serviced.
9. The insurer may accept or decline to act upon any transfer or assignment or endorsement, if it has sufficient reasons to believe that it is-
 - a. not bonafide or
 - b. not in the interest of the policyholder or
 - c. not in public interest or
 - d. is for the purpose of trading of the insurance policy.
10. Before refusing to act upon endorsement, the Insurer should record the reasons in writing and communicate the same in writing to Policyholder within 30 days from the date of policyholder giving a notice of transfer or assignment.
11. In case of refusal to act upon the endorsement by the Insurer, any person aggrieved by the refusal may prefer a claim to IRDAI within 30 days of receipt of the refusal letter from the Insurer.
12. The priority of claims of persons interested in an insurance policy would depend on the date on which the notices of assignment or transfer is delivered to the insurer; where there are more than one instruments of transfer or assignment, the priority will depend on dates of delivery of such notices. Any dispute in this regard as to priority should be referred to Authority.
13. Every assignment or transfer shall be deemed to be absolute assignment or transfer and the assignee or transferee shall be deemed to be absolute assignee or transferee, except
 - a. where assignment or transfer is subject to terms and conditions of transfer or assignment OR
 - b. where the transfer or assignment is made upon condition that
 - i) the proceeds under the policy shall become payable to policyholder or nominee(s) in the event of assignee or transferee dying before the insured OR
 - ii) the insured surviving the term of the policy

Such conditional assignee will not be entitled to obtain a loan on policy or surrender the policy. This provision will prevail notwithstanding any law or custom having force of law which is contrary to the above position.
14. In other cases, the insurer shall, subject to terms and conditions of assignment, recognize the transferee or assignee named in the notice as the absolute transferee or assignee and such person
 - a. shall be subject to all liabilities and equities to which the transferor or assignor was subject to at the date of transfer or assignment and
 - b. may institute any proceedings in relation to the policy
 - c. obtain loan under the policy or surrender the policy without obtaining the consent of the transferor or assignor or making him a party to the proceedings
15. Any rights and remedies of an assignee or transferee of a life insurance policy under an Assignment or transfer effected before commencement of the Insurance Laws (Amendment) Act shall not be affected by this section.

[Disclaimer: This is not a comprehensive list of amendments of Insurance Laws (Amendment) Act and only a simplified version prepared for general information. Policy Holders are advised to refer to the insurance Act as amended from time to time for complete and accurate details.]

Section 39 - Nomination by policyholder

Nomination of a life insurance Policy is as below in accordance with Section 39 of the Insurance Act, 1938 as amended from time to time. The extant provisions in this regard are as follows:

1. The policyholder of a life insurance on his own life may nominate a person or persons to whom money secured by the policy shall be paid in the event of his death.
2. Where the nominee is a minor, the policyholder may appoint any person to receive the money secured by the policy in the event of policyholder's death during the minority of the nominee. The manner of appointment to be laid down by the insurer.
3. Nomination can be made at any time before the maturity of the policy.
4. Nomination may be incorporated in the text of the policy itself or may be endorsed on the policy communicated to the insurer and can be registered by the insurer in the records relating to the policy.
5. Nomination can be cancelled or changed at any time before policy matures, by an endorsement or a further endorsement or a will as the case may be.
6. A notice in writing of Change or Cancellation of nomination must be delivered to the insurer for the insurer to be liable to such nominee. Otherwise, insurer will not be liable if a bonafide payment is made to the person named in the text of the policy or in the registered records of the insurer.
7. Fee to be paid to the insurer for registering change or cancellation of a nomination can be specified by the Authority through Regulations.
8. On receipt of notice with fee, the insurer should grant a written acknowledgement to the policyholder of having registered a nomination or cancellation or change thereof.
9. A transfer or assignment made in accordance with Section 38 shall automatically cancel the nomination except in case of assignment to the insurer or other transferee or assignee for purpose of loan or against security or its reassignment after repayment. In such case, the nomination will not get cancelled to the extent of insurer's or transferee's or assignee's interest in the policy. The nomination will get revived on repayment of the loan.
10. The right of any creditor to be paid out of the proceeds of any policy of life insurance shall not be affected by the nomination.
11. In case of nomination by policyholder whose life is insured, if the nominees die before the policyholder, the proceeds are payable to policyholder or his heirs or legal representatives or holder of succession certificate.
12. In case nominee(s) survive the person whose life is insured, the amount secured by the policy shall be paid to such survivor(s).
13. Where the policyholder whose life is insured nominates his
 - a. parents or
 - b. spouse or
 - c. children or
 - d. spouse and children
 - e. or any of themthe nominees are beneficially entitled to the amount payable by the insurer to the policyholder unless it is proved that policyholder could not have conferred such beneficial title on the nominee having regard to the nature of his title.
14. If nominee(s) die after the policyholder but before his share of the amount secured under the policy is paid, the share of the expired nominee(s) shall be payable to the heirs or legal representative of the nominee or holder of succession certificate of such nominee(s).
15. The provisions of sub-section 7 and 8 (13 and 14 above) shall apply to all life insurance policies maturing for payment after the commencement of Insurance Laws (Amendment) Act.
16. If policyholder dies after maturity but the proceeds and benefit of the policy has not been paid to him because of his death, his nominee(s) shall be entitled to the proceeds and benefit of the policy.
17. The provisions of Section 39 are not applicable to any life insurance policy to which Section 6 of Married Women's Property Act, 1874 applies or has at any time applied except where before or after Insurance Laws (Amendment) Act, a nomination is made in favour of spouse or children or spouse and children whether or not on the face of the policy it is mentioned that it is made under Section 39. Where nomination is intended to be made to spouse or children or spouse and children under Section 6 of MWP Act, it should be specifically mentioned on the policy. In such a case only, the provisions of Section 39 will not apply.

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Section 45 – Policy shall not be called in question on the ground of mis-statement after three years

Provisions regarding policy not being called into question in terms of Section 45 of the Insurance Act, 1938, as amended from time to time, are as follows:

1. No Policy of Life Insurance shall be called in question **on any ground whatsoever** after expiry of 3 yrs from
 - a. the date of issuance of policy or
 - b. the date of commencement of risk or
 - c. the date of revival of policy or
 - d. the date of rider to the policywhichever is later.
2. On the ground of fraud, a policy of Life Insurance may be called in question within 3 years from
 - a. the date of issuance of policy or
 - b. the date of commencement of risk or
 - c. the date of revival of policy or
 - d. the date of rider to the policywhich ever is later.

For this, the insurer should communicate in writing to the insured or legal representative or nominee or assignees of insured, as applicable, mentioning the ground and materials on which such decision is based.

3. Fraud means any of the following acts committed by insured or by his agent, with the intent to deceive the insurer or to induce the insurer to issue a life insurance policy:
 - a. The suggestion, as a fact of that which is not true and which the insured does not believe to be true;
 - b. The active concealment of a fact by the insured having knowledge or belief of the fact;
 - c. Any other act fitted to deceive; and
 - d. Any such act or omission as the law specifically declares to be fraudulent.
4. Mere silence is not fraud unless, depending on circumstances of the case, it is the duty of the insured or his agent keeping silence to speak or silence is in itself equivalent to speak
5. No Insurer shall repudiate a life insurance Policy on the ground of Fraud, if the Insured /beneficiary can prove that the misstatement was true to the best of his knowledge and there was no deliberate intention to suppress the fact or that such mis-statement of or suppression of material fact are within the knowledge of the insurer. Onus of disproving is upon the policyholder, if alive, or beneficiaries.
6. Life insurance Policy can be called in question within 3 years on the ground that any statement of or suppression of a fact material to expectancy of life of the insured was incorrectly made in the proposal or other document basis which policy was issued or revived or rider issued. For this, the insurer should communicate in writing to the insured or legal representative or nominee or assignees of insured, as applicable, mentioning the ground and materials on which decision to repudiate the policy of life insurance is based.
7. In case repudiation is on ground of mis-statement and not on fraud, the premium collected on policy till the date of repudiation shall be paid to the insured or legal representative or nominee or assignees of insured, within a period of 90 days from the date of repudiation.
8. Fact shall not be considered material unless it has a direct bearing on the risk undertaken by the insurer. The onus is on insurer to show that if the insurer had been aware of the said fact, no life insurance policy would have been issued to the insured.
9. The insurer can call for proof of age at any time if he is entitled to do so and no policy shall be deemed to be called in question merely because the terms of the policy are adjusted on subsequent proof of age of life insured. So, this Section will not be applicable for questioning age or adjustment based on proof of age submitted subsequently.

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