

MANAGING YOUR MONEY

Protecting Family Finances From The Unexpected

(NAPSA)—Many analysts say few things help safeguard a family's financial future like life insurance—especially in hard economic times. Yet many households have delayed purchasing this protection either because of procrastination or an assumption that they can't afford it, a mistake that could cost them down the road.

Life insurance provides cash to a person's family in the event of his or her death. This money—known as the death benefit—can be used to replace that person's income and can help families meet many important financial needs such as daily living expenses, funeral costs and college funding. And unlike a person's salary, there is generally no federal income tax on life insurance proceeds, and for most Americans, it may also be exempt from estate taxes.

Still, a national survey conducted for the financial services company ING in 2008 found that nearly a quarter of the people who say they should have life insurance have no coverage at all—and fear of their own mortality could be to blame. In fact, more Americans would rather go bungee jumping or make a speech in front of a crowd than talk about life insurance.

Fortunately, there are ways to make discussing life insurance easier and for people to better understand their options. For instance, ING's ING For LifeSM Web site, www.INGForLife.com, offers an online tool that walks consumers through an education process to help them determine the type of life insurance product and esti-



A new Web-based tool can make it easier to determine life insurance needs.

imated amount of coverage that best fit their personal situation.

The site's "Life Planning Toolbox" guides users through simple questions such as "What is your age, marital status and target retirement year?" while other features let you calculate how long current life insurance proceeds might last and how much money you might earn in your lifetime. There's also a "Quick Quote" feature that asks for simple information such as height, weight, age and relative level of health and then provides an estimated cost for coverage.

For example, a 35-year-old man who is a nonsmoker could obtain a \$500,000, 20-year term life insurance policy for about \$25 a month. The same man could obtain \$300,000 of coverage for the same term for about \$19 a month. Term life insurance provides protection for a specific period of time and generally pays a benefit only if the policyholder passes on during the "term." Term periods are available up to 30 years, with 20 years being the most common length.

After completing the research and education process, users of the site have the opportunity to move to the buying process. With a few clicks of a mouse, users can get life insurance quotes and connect to a licensed life insurance agent who will help them complete an application.

Staying Up To Date

Of course, obtaining life insurance is only one part of protecting a family's nest egg. The insurance also needs to be kept up to date, and that often means re-evaluating coverage with each major life change. Points to consider include:

- **Family Size**—The amount of coverage you need likely changes with the number of children you have. In addition to paying for necessities like food and clothing, the life insurance death benefit may be used for children's interests and hobbies including music, art or sports.

- **New Job**—If your standard of living has recently changed, it's important that your insurance is adjusted to provide that same lifestyle to your family should you pass on.

- **New Home**—Be certain you have enough insurance for the mortgage, property tax and homeowners insurance to be paid, should the unexpected occur.

- **Retirement**—Does your retirement plan depend on you living a long life? Life insurance should allow your spouse to remain retired should your retirement income suddenly be lost.

For more information, visit www.INGForLife.com.