

Offices in
Suffolk and
Virginia Beach, Virginia
Tel: 757-399-7506
Fax: 757-397-1267
Web: www.oasthook.com



MEMBER



Special needs require special lawyers.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Department of Veterans Affairs Programs Assist Local Veterans
- Ask Allie
- Announcement
- Distribution of This Newsletter

Editor
Sandra L. Smith,
Certified Elder Law Attorney

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS PROGRAMS ASSIST LOCAL VETERANS

The Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) manages many programs for veterans. The Hampton VA Medical Center is participating in two programs designed to assist local veterans: The Rural Health Initiative, and foster homes for veterans with disabilities.

The goal of the VA Rural Health Initiative is to help ensure the effective delivery of health services to rural and highly rural veterans. Many of these veterans do not have transportation to see their physicians or other health care providers, or they do not live near a VA health care facility. The VA has provided \$21.7 million in competitive funding to improve services specifically designed for veterans in rural areas with 74 projects selected for funding. One project designed to improve access to quality health care involves the Hampton VA Medical Center, as well as seven other facilities, serving veterans in Virginia, North Carolina, and parts of West Virginia. The facilities operate aggressive outreach programs to veterans in order to provide them with information on their veterans' health care benefits, or answer questions that veterans may have about their care. The goal of the initiative is to educate veterans and increase enrollment of eligible veterans into the VA health care system. Pharmacists, nurse educators, and social workers are among the professionals on the initiative teams, which are now reaching into local cities. According to the VA, more than 837,000 service members have deployed since 2002. Of these deployed veterans, only 39% have used veterans' health care benefits. The outreach program appears to be working; between February and October 2010, enrollment in the VA health care system has jumped in three Northeastern North Carolina counties serviced by the Hampton VA Medical Center. For example, in Pasquotank County, VA enrollment increased from 7,919 in February 2010 to 13,393 in October 2010.

The medical foster home program is a new approach for veterans with disabilities. The veterans receive medical care in a home setting, rather than in a facility. The care is more personal and relaxed than care in an institution. "It's a holistic approach," says Alicia Thompson, medical foster care coordinator at the Hampton VA Medical Center. The program does more than match a willing caregiver with a willing patient. The patient must be suited for foster care. Caregivers must undergo an FBI background check, get a physical, and their homes must be inspected for general safety, environmental concerns, and whether the space is adequate for the veteran. A team from the VA checks in every month, and the caregiver and patient have regular contact with nurses, social workers, mental health experts and other professionals. The caregiver dispenses medication and concentrates on giving the veteran a good quality of life. The foster program is less expensive for the VA than institutional care; the veteran's financial benefits cover the cost of placement, and the amount depends on the level of care needed. In the area served by the Hampton VA, the average cost is \$1,000 to \$2,000 per month, although that can be negotiated. A veteran who does not have \$1,000 per month to pay for care should not be discouraged from applying for the foster care program.

The *Oast & Hook News* will monitor further development with these and other VA programs.

The attorneys at Oast & Hook can assist clients with their financial, estate, insurance, life care, veterans benefits and special needs planning issues.

Ask Allie

O&H: Allie, we've heard how important water is to humans, so we know it must be important to cats. Please tell us about it.

Allie: Sure! Christine A. Belluzza, D.V.M., co-director of Cornell University's Feline Health Center, says, "Cats evolved in deserts, so they can conserve water and don't have high thirst drives like dogs," which is why many cats scowl at the sight of water. Cats who don't drink enough, however, can become dehydrated, which can cause constipation, lower urinary tract disease, or kidney disease. Cat families can try the following tips to get their cats to drink. First, try low-sodium broth or the juice from canned tuna; however, don't salt the cat's food to try to get them to drink more. Too much salt can result in urinary blockages, bladder stones and progressive kidney disease. Try lactose-free milk specially formulated for cats instead of cow's milk; many cats are lactose-intolerant. If you don't drink your own tap water because it tastes bad, share your filtered water with your cat. Some families try pet circulating water fountains. If your cat has a urinary tract issue, moisten dry food with water or other liquids, or switch to canned food, which is 78% water compared to 7 to 10% for dry food. All this talk of water has made me thirsty. Time to get a drink, then play with my mom. I hope our readers are having a happy Thanksgiving weekend. See you next week!

Announcement

Oast & Hook attorney Brian Boys will speak on the topic of estate planning from noon to 1:00 p.m., Tuesday, January 11th at Fourth Baptist Church located at 726 South Street, Portsmouth, Virginia 23704. For more information on this church, please visit www.fourthbaptistchurch.com. For more information on this presentation, please phone Jennie Dell at 757-399-7506.

Distribution of This Newsletter

Oast & Hook encourages you to share this newsletter with anyone who is interested in issues pertaining to the elderly, the disabled and their advocates. The information in this newsletter may be copied and distributed, without charge and without permission, but with appropriate citation to Oast & Hook, P.C. If you are interested in a free subscription to the *Oast & Hook News*, then please e-mail us at mail@oasthook.com, telephone us at 757-399-7506, or fax us at 757-397-1267.

Please visit us on the world wide web at:

www.oasthook.com

Our website contains information about Oast & Hook and an archive of our newsletters and other estate planning, estate administration, and elder law articles in searchable form at.

Copyright © 2010 by Oast & Hook, P.C.

This newsletter is not intended as a substitute for legal counsel. While every precaution has been taken to make this newsletter accurate, we assume no responsibility for errors, omissions, or damages resulting from the use of the information in this newsletter.

This newsletter is produced to be sent electronically. If we currently fax you a copy of the Oast & Hook News but you prefer to receive it by e-mail, then please contact us at: mail@oasthook.com.

If you would like to be removed from our Oast & Hook News distribution list, please e-mail us at mail@oasthook.com, telephone us at 757-399-7506, or fax us at 757-397-1267.