

Offices in  
Suffolk and  
Virginia Beach, Virginia  
Tel: 757-399-7506  
Fax: 757-397-1267  
Web: [www.oasthook.com](http://www.oasthook.com)



MEMBER



*Special needs require special lawyers.*

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- At-Home  
Technology Allows  
Seniors to Remain  
Independent
- Ask Allie
- Announcement
- Distribution of This  
Newsletter

Editor  
Sandra L. Smith,  
Certified Elder Law Attorney

## AT-HOME TECHNOLOGY ALLOWS SENIORS TO REMAIN INDEPENDENT

Most seniors would agree that one of their biggest concerns about growing older is the eventual loss of their independence. They worry that as they become unable to engage in certain activities of daily living, they will become a burden on loved ones or have to move into an expensive nursing home or assisted living facility. Fortunately, technological advances are offering seniors a variety of options to avoid unnecessary early institutionalization and allow them to stay in their homes if that is where they want to remain. A recent article on MSNBC.com examined these at-home monitoring systems and how they allow seniors to remain independent while providing families peace of mind.

Technology has come a long way since the days of devices which simply alerted someone that the wearer of the device had fallen and couldn't get up. At-home technology can now monitor senior citizens' movements and sleep and bathroom patterns. A senior's vital signs including blood pressure, pulse, weight and blood-oxygen levels can also be monitored at home. The information is sent to a medical provider who tracks it. If problems occur, then the patient can have a teleconference with a nurse or schedule an appointment with a physician. Some equipment can even be programmed to answer the telephone, turn off appliances that are inadvertently left on, and alert an individual to a fire or other emergency.

There are also products available that remind seniors to take their medications. These medication dispensing machines are programmed to hold a certain number of doses of medication per day. The machine will announce to the individual when it's time to take medications. Usually the individual is required to push some sort of button for the machine to dispense the allotted dosage of medication. If the button is not pushed within a certain amount of time of the reminder, then the device will typically alert a call center which will in turn notify the individual's caregiver.

Additionally, some machines will move any medication not taken into a locked chamber to avoid an overdose. This is extremely helpful to those patients who are on a lot of medications or who have memory problems.

All of these at-home devices are designed to allow older individuals to remain in their homes with more oversight from loved ones or medical specialists. These products can monitor how well seniors are managing the chores of daily living and offer peace of mind to caregivers or family members. For example, through these devices, a son living in California can see how his mother is doing in Virginia. The ability to closely monitor a person's lifestyle can assist family members in knowing when an older individual can no longer remain at home. Seniors like having technology provide this extra layer of security so they can maintain their independence as well as their privacy. These products tend to be the most successful when they are tied to an agency that can dispatch meals, medical help, or other senior services. On average, these at-home monitoring systems cost around \$150 to \$250 per month.

If maintaining your independence and privacy for as long as possible is an important goal for you, then at-home monitoring devices may be an option for you. Oast & Hook now has a life care planner on staff who can assist clients with these issues as well as help coordinate care for clients who need assistance in their homes. The attorneys at Oast & Hook assist families with their estate, financial, insurance, long-term care, veterans' benefits, and special needs planning issues.

#### **Ask Allie**

O&H: Allie, we've heard about military working dogs. Please tell us about the men and women who provide medical care for them.

Allie: Sure! The Army is the only service that trains animal care specialists. There are 485 animal care specialists in the Army, and they learn in 11 weeks what civilian veterinary technicians learn in two years. The students visit the Lt. Col Daniel E. Holland Military Working Dog Hospital at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, during their training. This is an Army-run hospital that supports the Air Force's 341st Training Squadron, which trains military working dogs for the Defense Department. The hospital regularly treats about 900 dogs that need routine care such as physical exams and teeth cleanings. The students receive experience working with real military working dogs and their handlers, and they free up hospital staff for other duties. What a great program! Our military working dogs deserve the best care that can be provided for them. All of this talk about work makes me ready for my afternoon nap . . . See you next week!

#### **Announcement**

Oast & Hook is proud to announce that it has partnered with Commonwealth Assisted Living to offer a series of seminars for veteran seniors and their families. Each seminar will cover veterans benefits, veteran's aid and attendance, elder law, Medicare, and long-term care planning. The seminars will begin at 6:00 p.m. and will end at 7:00 p.m.. Below are the dates and locations of each seminar. Seating is

limited. If you have any questions or if you would like to register for one of these seminars, then please phone Oast & Hook at 757-399-7506.

**May 24, 2012**

Georgian Manor  
651 River Walk Parkway  
Chesapeake, Virginia 23320  
Tel: 757-436-9618

**June 7, 2012**

The Ballentine  
7211 Granby Street  
Norfolk, Virginia 23505  
Tel: 757-440-7400

**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](mailto:mail@oasthook.com), telephone us at 757-399-7506, or fax us at 757-397-1267.

**Copyright © 2012 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.*

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