

Understanding How Income Impacts Means-Tested Benefits

This Weekly Newsletter
is brought to you by

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Some of our clients express a desire to supplement their public benefits with additional income. To understand how this additional income will affect your benefits, you must first understand what benefit you are receiving.

Supplemental Security Income

To receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI), you must be age 65 or older, blind, or disabled and have limited income and have individual resources less than \$2,000. If you are receiving SSI, benefits will be reduced as follows:

- Dollar for dollar after the first \$65 plus ½ the remainder of gross earnings each month
- Dollar for dollar after the first \$20 of unearned income

For 2014, an individual receiving SSI could earn up to \$1,527 per month and remain eligible for the SSI benefit. However, if an individual has monthly earnings of \$1,070 or more, that individual may be considered to engage in “substantial gainful employment” and therefore not meet the initial disability eligibility requirements.

Medicaid

Medicaid is a jointly funded state-federal health care program designed to provide medical assistance to needy persons who qualify. As a general rule, an adult may continue to receive Medicaid so long as they continue to receive at least \$1 of SSI. In 2010 the Affordable Care Act expanded Medicaid coverage to individuals under the age of 65 with income up to 138% of the federal poverty level. For the year 2014, that amounts to \$15,521.10

Section 8

The Public Housing Program helps-low income families, people with disabilities, and elderly people with renting safe, decent, and affordable housing. To be eligible, your gross income must not exceed the low-income limits. Local housing agencies use income limits developed by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which sets the lower income limits at 80% and

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very low income at 50% of the median income for the area in which you choose to live. In general, to receive Section 8 housing, income may not exceed 50% of the median income for the area in which you choose to live. Pursuant to the Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA), the state median income for 2014 is \$77,500 while the median income for Hampton Roads is \$70,600. Based on this information, an individual in the Hampton Roads area may be eligible to receive Section 8 benefits if their income is below \$24,750.

While supplementing public benefits with additional income may appear to be beneficial, the decision with regard to how much you can and should work is a complex decision that involves analyzing more than just current cash needs. The attorneys and staff of the Hook Law Center understand the complexities involving public benefits. Should you have any questions with regard to obtaining public benefits or analyzing the benefits your currently receive, contact us for a consultation.



Wonders of Felines - Part I

Hook Law Center: Kit Kat, what is so unique about felines?

Kit Kat: Plenty--as it turns out. A recent study by the BBC and the Royal Veterinary College has just released some interesting information about the uniqueness of cats. Their highly developed senses, honed over centuries, make them excellent predators. So those that do exist outside can fend for themselves, though they, too, can become victims of larger prey. Those that live outside are unlikely to live as long as their domestic cousins.

Here are a few things about cats that are unique to them in the animal world. 1) They have excellent vision and over-sized eyes for their frames. Although they see things in less vivid colors than humans, this allows them to focus on the object of interest and see better in low-level light. 2) According to this study, "Cats are the gymnasts of the animal world." Their back legs act as springs enabling them to leap long distances. Their spinal columns are so flexible that they can twist sideways and elongate, almost as if they were one of those toys known as a "slinky." This flexible spinal column allows them to better absorb the shock of falling from heights as compared to other animals. More will be featured in next week's column. (www.bbc.com/news/magazine-28795300)

Upcoming Events

- **October 23, 2014** - Andrew Hook will speak on The Top Issues Every Practitioner Needs to Know How to Spot Related to Elder Law to the Virginia Beach Bar Association.

- **October 29, 2014** - Hook Law Center will be represented at the Virginia Beach 2014 Senior Showcase at the Princess Anne Recreation Center, 1400 Nimmo Parkway, Virginia Beach, VA 23456 from 9:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. This event is free and open to the public.
- **November 1, 2014** - Andrew H. Hook will be presenting a workshop on Financial Fitness at Senior Services of Southeastern Virginia's "The Art of Healthy Aging Forum and Expo" to be held at the Virginia Beach Convention Center, 1000 19th Street, Virginia Beach, VA, 23451. The expo hours are 8:00 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. To register, please call SSSEVA at 757-461-9481, ext. 204. For more information, please contact Debbie Schwartz with Senior Services of Southeastern Virginia at 757-461-9481, x 105.
- **November 4, 2014** - Hook Law Center is sponsoring Senior Advocate's Active Aging Series at Westminster Canterbury, 3100 Shore Drive, Virginia Beach VA 23451. HLC Attorney Shannon Laymon-Pecoraro will provide an overview of Hook Law Center's Practice Areas at the meeting which begins at 10:00 a.m. To RSVP, please call Senior Advocate at 757-645-6364. *RSVP responses will be taken on a first-come, first-served basis.* Each session includes a complimentary lunch. We look forward to seeing you there!
- **November 12, 2014** - Andrew H. Hook and Shannon Laymon-Pecoraro will be presenting a seminar on Medicaid Liens to a local Virginia personal injury law firm.
- **November 13, 2014** - Andrew Hook will speak to the Central Virginia Estate Planning Council in Charlottesville, Virginia regarding Elder Health Care-What Will It Look Like Tomorrow and How Much Will It Cost?

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