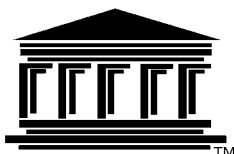


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WHAT IS A CELA?

As a Certified Elder Law Attorney (CELA), Andrew Hook is frequently asked what is a CELA? He is not surprised – Elder Law is a relatively new legal specialty.

The National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (NAELA) was formed in 1988 to address the unique needs of the elderly and the disabled. Elder Law differs from other legal specialties (for example, tax law or trust and estates law) since it seeks to provide comprehensive services to a class of people rather than provide narrowly focused technical skills.

In July 1993, NAELA assisted in the formation of a nonprofit organization called the National Elder Law Foundation (NELF). The purpose of NELF is to develop and improve the professional competence of lawyers in the field of Elder Law.

The role of the Elder Law Attorney consists of: discussing estate planning issues and advising the client about planning for incapacity with alternative decision making documents; assisting the client in planning for possible long-term care needs, including nursing home care; Medicaid planning; locating the appropriate type of care; coordinating private and public resources to finance the cost of care; and working to ensure the client's right to quality care.

NELF's board of directors decided to identify those lawyers who had a sufficiently enhanced level of skill and knowledge in the area of Elder Law, coupled with the competence to identify the elderly client's needs, and capability to either take care of the client or refer the client to someone else who could. NELF developed a certification program and submitted it to the American Bar Association for accreditation. The first exam was given in November 1994. In February 1995, the American Bar Association's House of Delegates accredited NELF as the certifying entity for specialization in Elder Law.

To become a CELA, an attorney must be in good standing, have substantial involvement in the practice of Elder Law, take 15 hours of continuing legal education in Elder Law each year, submit to peer review, and successfully pass a comprehensive written exam. The CELA exam is rigorous. The pass rate is about 60%. Certification does not last forever, and re-certification is not automatic. The attorney must apply for re-certification every five years. The re-certification process includes peer review, proof of continuing legal education, and a comprehensive written exam.

Oast & Hook is proud to say that Andrew Hook became a CELA in 1995. He now serves as the chairman of the committee that prepares and grades the CELA exam. Mr. Hook is the only CELA in south Hampton Roads.

As of May 2004, there are 302 attorneys in 37 states who are certified in the area of Elder Law. The American Bar Association's Standing Committee on Specialization reports that Elder Law is the fastest growing ABA approved specialty.

The next time you interview an Elder Law attorney, ask if the attorney is a CELA. If not, ask the attorney why not?

Oast & Hook

Oast & Hook is an Elder Law firm. We represent older persons, disabled persons, their families, and their advocates. The practice of Elder Law includes estate planning, estate and trust administration, powers of attorney, advance medical directives, guardianships, conservatorships, and public entitlements (Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, and SSI), disability planning, estate, gift and income tax matters, bill paying, care management, and fiduciary services. We also handle litigation involving these issues, such as will contests and estate administration disputes. For more information about Oast & Hook, please visit our website at www.oasthook.com.

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 *Elder Law News*, then please e-mail us at eln@oasthook.com, call us at 757-399-7506, or fax us at 757-397-1267.

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