

REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION

HENDERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

MEETING DATE: August 4, 2025

SUBJECT: Grant Application – The Grace Foundation

PRESENTER: Jodi Grabowski, Strategic Behavioral Health Director

ATTACHMENT(S): Grant Application

SUMMARY OF REQUEST:

The Grace Foundation, an entity of Grace Lutheran Church, has an open application process for grant funding. The Grace Foundation's initiative includes support of people involved in the justice system.

The Henderson County Strategic Behavioral Health Department's Adult Recovery Court (ARC) is requesting funding to support participants with driver license restoration, criminal record expungement, and other civil legal needs. These services are critical to helping ARC participants achieve long-term recovery, family reunification, and successful reintegration into the community. This initiative seeks to eliminate barriers that prevent individuals from accessing employment, housing, education, and essential family responsibilities — especially in our suburban and rural areas, where reliable transportation is a necessity.

No county funds or county positions will be required for the initiative.

BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:

The Board is requested to authorize the grant application to The Grace Foundation to support participants with driver license restoration, criminal record expungement, and other civil legal needs.

SUGGESTED MOTION:

I move that the Board authorize the grant application to The Grace Foundation for the to support participants with driver license restoration, criminal record expungement, and other civil legal needs.

Grace Foundation Grant Application

Submitted by: Henderson County Adult Recovery Court (ARC)

Date: 7/28/2025

Project Title:

Henderson County ARC Legal Support Services

Amount Requested:

\$10,000

Project Summary:

The Henderson County Adult Recovery Court (ARC) is requesting funding to retain the legal services of Pisgah Legal Services to support participants with driver license restoration, criminal record expungement, and other civil legal needs. These legal services are critical to helping our participants achieve long-term recovery, family reunification, and successful reintegration into the community. This initiative seeks to eliminate barriers that prevent individuals from accessing employment, housing, education, and essential family responsibilities — especially in our suburban and rural areas, where reliable transportation is a necessity, not a luxury.

Background and Need:

The Henderson County Adult Recovery Court serves individuals struggling with substance use disorders and criminal justice involvement, most of whom are parents and individuals working to rebuild their lives and reunify with children. A significant portion of our participants face persistent legal barriers — including suspended driver's licenses, old charges that can be expunged, and unresolved civil legal issues — that severely limit their progress.

Transportation in Rural/Suburban Communities:

- According to the American Public Transportation Association, 45% of Americans have no access to public transit. In more rural counties like Henderson, this percentage is even higher.
- A study by the Urban Institute found that 80% of job seekers in rural areas cite transportation as a primary barrier to employment.
- Mothers with children and individuals on supervision who lack a valid driver's license often cannot make required appointments, court hearings, or employment obligations —

which can lead to relapse, re-incarceration, or family separation.

Driver License Suspensions

- The Legal Aid Justice Center reports that over 11 million Americans have suspended driver's licenses for reasons unrelated to dangerous driving — most often due to unpaid court fines or administrative issues.
- In North Carolina alone, as of 2023, there were more than 1.25 million people with suspended or revoked licenses, disproportionately affecting low-income individuals and communities of color.
- The inability to drive in a county like ours makes attending recovery meetings, employment, and child custody appointments nearly impossible — increasing the risk of recidivism.

Expungement:

- Criminal record expungement increases job offers by 63% for those with non-violent charges, according to the University of Michigan Law School.

Proposed Use of Funds:

Funds from the Grace Foundation will be used to contract with a licensed attorney to provide:

- Driver license restoration assistance (e.g., DMV hearings, payment plans, documentation)
- Criminal record expungement support (screening, petitions, court filings)
- Additional civil legal services to support ARC participant success including housing, family law, and income.

This \$10,000 grant will be a vital portion of the estimated \$30,000 needed to support both legal counsel and financial assistance with DMV or court-related fines and fees. We will pursue additional funding to match and maximize this investment.

Organizational Capacity:

The Henderson County Adult Recovery Court is a collaborative effort between Henderson County, the District Court, Department of Adult Corrections, treatment providers, community partners and stakeholders. Our team includes a Judge, Court Coordinator, District Attorney, Public Defender, Probation Officer, treatment professionals and community recovery supports. We have a strong track record of accountability and outcomes-based performance.

Pisgah Legal Services has been providing legal support to many citizens in Western North Carolina, especially marginalized communities and the justice-involved population.

Community Impact:

This project aligns with the Grace Lutheran Justice and Advocacy Ministry's mission to advocate for justice, fairness, diversity and equality; as well as its goal to work for equitable passage forward to opportunities and full privileges for all.

Legal barriers are among the most persistent and destabilizing challenges for people in early recovery. Removing them increases the odds of success, strengthens families, and reduces the likelihood of relapse and re-incarceration.

By helping individuals become legally mobile, self-sufficient, and stable, we also increase public safety, child well-being, and community health.

Budget Overview:

Item	Cost Estimate
Attorney Contract (Legal Counsel)	\$10,000
Financial Assistance for DMV & Court Fines	\$20,000
Total Program Cost	**\$30,000**

Conclusion:

With your support, the Henderson County Adult Recovery Court can break down one of the most entrenched and devastating barriers to recovery and reintegration: access to legal advocacy. This initiative will empower our participants to move forward with dignity, purpose, and a path to long-term recovery.

Thank you for considering this request and for your ongoing commitment to a healthier, more just Henderson County.

Respectfully,

Daniel Conway
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