

## **REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION**

### **HENDERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**MEETING DATE:** August 4, 2025

**SUBJECT:** Grant Application – The Blue Ridge Alcohol Beverage Control Board

**PRESENTER:** Jodi Grabowski, Strategic Behavioral Health Director

**ATTACHMENT(S):** None

#### **SUMMARY OF REQUEST:**

The Blue Ridge ABC (Alcohol Beverage Control) Board has opened applications for grant funding. The Blue Ridge ABC Board provided grant funding for the Adult Recovery Court in FY25 and this grant is a continuation of that work.

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 Blue Ridge ABC Board for the to support participants with driver license restoration, criminal record expungement, and other civil legal needs.

#### **SUGGESTED MOTION:**

*I move that the Board authorize grant application to The Blue Ridge ABC Board to support participants with driver license restoration, criminal record expungement, and other civil legal needs.*

# Blue Ridge ABC Board Grant Application

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Submitted by: Henderson County Adult Recovery Court (ARC)

Date: 7/28/2025

## **Project Title:**

Henderson County ARC Legal Support Services

## **Amount Requested:**

\$20,000

## **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 ABC Board will be used to contract with a licensed attorney to provide:

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

This \$20,000 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, the Department of Adult Corrections, local 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 NC ABC Board's mission to enhance public safety and promote responsible behavior within our communities. By helping these individuals navigate the reinstatement process—such as legal aid, DMV fees, and compliance support—we foster accountability while empowering participants to rebuild their lives. This support not only reduces the risk of relapse and reoffending but also enhances public safety by ensuring more drivers are properly licensed and insured. It reinforces the Board's commitment to proactive, community-based prevention and recovery support strategies that reduce alcohol-related harm and promote a healthier, more stable region.

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
<b>**Total Program Cost**</b>	<b>**\$30,000**</b>

### 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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