

Buncombe County's Support is Critical to Pisgah Legal Services & Our Clients

- Since the recession, Pisgah Legal Services has lost more than half of its funding from state sources, and also had cuts from United Ways. The State now provides Pisgah Legal Services with less funding than PLS receives from county governments. While we have lost funding, the number of people in poverty in our service area has grown, the affordable housing crisis has intensified and we have expanded our collaborative efforts to address domestic violence in Buncombe County.
- Pisgah Legal has less designated funding for our homelessness prevention efforts this year than in any of the past four years. We had to cut a full-time attorney position from our housing team.
- **Without funding from Buncombe County, Pisgah Legal would likely have to cut several staff attorney positions and serve thousands fewer people in crisis per year.** We would struggle to provide leadership on critical community issues, including affordable housing and homelessness, domestic violence, and access to health insurance and health care.
- Pisgah Legal Services has aggressively increased the revenue raised through our annual campaign over the past four years but we could not raise enough funding from donors or foundations to make up for a significant loss in County funding.

Most of Pisgah Legal Services' clients would face even more serious crises and would require additional, costly community services without help from a PLS staff or volunteer lawyer.

Without a lawyer, Buncombe County families with children would be homeless.

Neesa, her husband and their two children had to leave their rental home suddenly (with 30-minutes' notice) when it was condemned. With no other option the family moved into another house with serious and dangerous problems. When they requested that repairs be made, the landlord retaliated by filing to evict them. Faced with losing their housing for a second time in six months, Neesa came to PLS and a staff attorney stopped the eviction and secured a rent abatement, which gave the family resources to find safer housing. Without a lawyer, this family would have been illegally evicted from their home and had no resources to secure new housing. They tell us they would have been homeless.

Without a lawyer, women and children would have to return to homes where they were abused.

"Sarah's" alcoholic husband was physically and emotionally abusive towards her and often endangered their toddler when he was drunk. In one incident Sarah's husband tried to run away with their son. When she attempted to stop him, he attacked her while she was holding their son and injured both Sarah and the child. A neighbor saw the incident and called the police, who arrested Sarah's husband. PLS helped Sarah secure a domestic violence protection order, along with full custody of her son and possession of the family home. Without a lawyer, Sarah would not have known how to secure custody or possession of her home so that she could separate from her husband. She and her child would have suffered more abuse.

Without a lawyer, children would get sicker from living in dangerous, substandard housing.

Seven-year-old "Evan" lived with his mother in a moldy basement apartment without reliable heat. He suffered from severe asthma because of the deplorable housing conditions and visited the doctor often. When his mother told the doctor about their housing, he referred the family to Pisgah Legal Services. An attorney helped to secure a refund of the rent the family had paid for the unsafe housing and they were able to move to a new, safer home. Without a lawyer, this young child would have continued to suffer and possibly had lifelong health problems.



Helping Thousands of Buncombe Residents with a High Return On Investment

Pisgah Legal Services is one of the most far-reaching and effective agencies addressing issues of poverty and domestic violence in Buncombe County. In 2015, we helped 7,985 Buncombe County residents in crisis, which is a 6% increase over the number helped in 2014.

With support from Buncombe County and other funding, Pisgah Legal secured \$12.9 million in quantifiable benefits for our Buncombe County clients in 2015.

We produce a **high return on investment of 5 to 1** with funding invested by Buncombe County and other sources. (ROI calculated based on quantifiable benefits compared to PLS' operating budget.)

The Child and Family Protection and Self-Sufficiency Project

PROJECT'S IMPACT IN OUR COMMUNITY: With County support Pisgah Legal Services proposes to provide legal assistance to 3,000 low-income households in Buncombe County in 2016-17. We expect that this project would improve the lives of at least 6,000 adults and children in crisis in our county.

WHAT WE WILL DO:

This grant would help low-income children and families in three major areas that affect their most basic and urgent needs:

- **SAFETY FROM ABUSE:** The project will help victims of domestic violence and child abuse escape abuse and rebuild their lives. PLS attorneys help victims secure court protection orders, child custody, child support, divorce, and rights to essential marital property, such as a house or car.
- **SAFE, STABLE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING:** This project will help low-income families stabilize their housing and avoid homelessness. PLS attorneys stop illegal/unnecessary evictions; stop home foreclosure; improve substandard housing conditions; maintain utility services; and secure public and subsidized housing benefits for very low-income families.
- **INCOME AND HEALTH CARE:** This project will help low-income families secure public benefits & other resources for which they are eligible, including subsistence income, health care and food assistance.

WHY LEGAL AID IS NEEDED:

Most of our clients have problems that can only be fully resolved by an attorney. They need an attorney to help them understand their rights under the law, negotiate on their behalf, and/or represent them in court or in an administrative appeals process (such as denial of public benefits). According to an analysis of 12

studies, “lawyer-represented people do better—on average, lawyer-represented people are more likely to win than are unrepresented people in every study.” Rebecca L. Sandefur, *The Impact of Counsel: An Analysis of Empirical Evidence*, 9 Seattle U. L. Rev. 51 (2010)

Pisgah Legal Services Helps Reduce Costs for the County & Taxpayers

By helping low-income residents to resolve their problems and prevent further crises, Pisgah Legal Services **helps our community and our tax payers reduce costs and use resources more efficiently.** When we stop domestic violence, prevent homelessness and secure essentials like income and health care, PLS helps prevent the need for costly public and community services, including law enforcement and corrections, health care, emergency shelter, and child protective services.

Stopping abuse saves community resources: “Every dollar spent on the protective order intervention produced \$30.75 in avoided costs to society.” Reports indicate some 86% of the women who received a protection order state the abuse either stopped or was greatly reduced. Representation by an attorney makes it more likely that a victim will obtain a Domestic Violence Protective Order. (Meda Chesney-Lind, James Ptacek, *Battered Women in the Courtroom: The Power of Judicial Response*, 35 Crime, L. & Soc. Change 363 (2001))

Preventing homelessness saves community resources: Providing legal aid to prevent homelessness saves our community money. A 2014 independent economic-impact analysis by Creative Housing Solutions showed that in Central Florida the region spends \$31,000 a year per homeless person on “the salaries of law-enforcement officers to arrest and transport homeless individuals — largely for nonviolent offenses such as trespassing, public intoxication or sleeping in parks — as well as the cost of jail stays, emergency-room visits and hospitalization for medical and psychiatric issues.”

Legal aid saves public dollars: One study conducted by three independent firms in Massachusetts found that ‘every dollar spent on civil legal aid in eviction and foreclosure cases saved the state \$2.69 on state services associated with housing needs such as “emergency shelter, health care, foster care, and law enforcement.’ Every dollar spent on assisting qualified people to receive federal benefits brings in \$5 to the state. Lastly, every dollar spent on civil legal aid related to domestic violence is offset by a dollar in medical costs averted due to fewer incidents of assault. (Boston Bar Association's Statewide Task Force to Expand Civil Legal Aid)

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More information about Pisgah Legal Services’ impact at www.pisgahlegal.org.



BUNCOMBE COUNTY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2015, PLS helped more than 7,985 low-income people in Buncombe County to meet basic needs. (Includes all members of households in cases closed and pending.)

PLS helped 3,075 Buncombe County children avoid homelessness, escape abuse and secure essentials.

PLS closed a total of 2,897 legal cases to help Buncombe County residents, including: 816 cases to secure safety from domestic violence and 1,296 cases to address housing and consumer problems.

Through PLS' Mountain Area Volunteer Lawyer Program (MAVL), private attorneys closed **671** cases to assist Buncombe County clients. In these cases, the attorneys provided a total of **2,375** donated hours modestly valued at **\$475,000**.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN ALL COUNTIES

PLS helped more than 15,477 low-income people meet basic needs in 2015.

(Includes all members of households in cases closed and pending and 1790 family members who were helped by ACA Navigator appointments)

- Altogether, the MAVL Program coordinated more than **282** volunteer attorneys who donated **3,087** professional hours helping PLS clients. These services are modestly valued at **\$617,400**.
- Office volunteers contributed more than **6,624 hours of service** to interview potential clients, assist with legal research, and support administration.
- PLS secured more than **\$18,995,539** in quantifiable benefits for clients, such as home equity saved from foreclosure and child support payments for domestic violence victims.

On a budget of \$3.5 million, PLS produced a return on investment of more than 5:1

PLS advocates and works collaboratively to alleviate poverty.

Increasing Access to Healthcare: Pisgah Legal Services worked with statewide partners through the NC Navigator Consortium to implement the Affordable Care Act and provide in-depth, one-on-one enrollment assistance and education to the WNC community. ACA volunteer navigators provided over 2,000 hours of assistance and PLS helped over 1,700 family members understand their options for affordable health insurance. The uninsured rate has dropped nationally, and across the PLS six-county service region the uninsured rate of our community members has dropped an average of 4.3% from 2013-2015.

Preventing Domestic Violence Homicides: Pisgah Legal Services worked with government and nonprofit agencies on the *eNough Campaign*, a coordinated effort to reduce domestic violence (DV) homicides in Buncombe County. The collaboration began after Buncombe had the second highest DV homicide rate in N.C. in 2013 with eight deaths. With these collaborative efforts, which have included planning for a Family Justice Center to open in Asheville in 2016, the county saw just one DV homicide in all of 2014 and 2015.