

# FY2024 Buncombe County Strategic Partnership Grant Report

<b>Organization Name:</b>	Pisgah Legal Services	
<b>Project Name:</b>	Homelessness Prevention Program	
<b>Reporting Quarter:</b> (Check one)		Quarter 1 (July 1, 2023 - September 30, 2023)
		Quarter 2 (October 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023)
		Quarter 3 (January 1, 2024 - March 31, 2024)
	X	Quarter 4 (April 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024)

## Narrative summary of grant related activities

Please provide a brief summary (no more than 1500 characters). You may attach supplemental documents if needed.

<b>Quarter 1</b>	Pisgah Legal Services has provided legal services in the area of housing to 549 households with the total number of people helped equaling 1,199 in the first quarter of the grant. More than half the cases we closed this quarter related to preventing or delaying eviction for our clients and is indicative of the trends we continue to see. Though Buncombe County HHS has reopened applications for rental assistance, most other pandemic-related financial assistance has ended. This means there are fewer resources to direct our clients to when facing eviction due to an inability to pay rents that are rising faster than inflation. We continue to provide legal services at the Buncombe County Courthouse, providing on-the-spot legal services on dates with high rates of eviction hearings being heard. The courthouse work allows us to proactively reach out to clients who are typically underserved populations. In total 36% of the people we served through our Homelessness Prevention Program in Buncombe County this quarter identified as Black.
<b>Quarter 2</b>	Pisgah Legal Services has provided legal services in the area of housing to 774 households with the total number of people helped equaling 1,680 during the two quarters of the grant. In Buncombe County, an average of over 210 evictions were filed per month during October and November (December data is not yet available). This problem is not unique to our county as state and national data suggest that evictions are rising, especially in urban areas where housing prices are high. During the second quarter we closed 210 cases of which 51% of the outcomes achieved were related to preventing or delaying eviction for our clients. For the other cases, 27% of our clients were helped to obtain or preserve eligibility for housing assistance; we improved housing conditions for 16%; 4% of our clients avoided foreclosure; and we delayed foreclosure for 3%. Approximately 10 of our clients had their power and/or water cut off by their landlord during this quarter. Luckily, we were able to resolve these issues without court filings in most cases. During the last three months of this grant, 70% of our clients were women, 38% have children in the home; and 38.5% identified as BIPOC.

<b>Quarter 3</b>	<p>Pisgah Legal Services has provided legal services in the area of housing to 975 households with the total number of people helped equaling 2,093 during the three quarters of the grant. According to the NC Housing Coalition, 2,262 Buncombe County families faced an eviction filing in 2023 and this trend is not dissipating in 2024. Of the 181 cases closed during the third quarter of this grant, 157 were eviction cases. The NC Housing Coalition also states that local families need to earn an income of \$67,200 per year to afford Fair Market Rent in the county, yet the average annual income of our Buncombe County housing clients since July 1, 2023 is only \$15,947. Fair Market Rents have increased 15% in the last year and 69% in the last five years as published by HUD. Many studies on the value of legal advice or representation for tenants facing eviction find that individuals receiving legal assistance are much more likely to achieve the desired legal outcome than those without legal help. In one example, a 2018 study "Legal Representation in Evictions - Comparative Studies", found that tenants who were fully represented won or settled their cases 96% of the time, compared with just 62% of unrepresented clients. For the cases we closed during the last quarter, we had a 99% success rate obtaining a positive outcome for the clients that we fully represented.</p> <p>During the third quarter, 71% of our clients were women, 46% have children in the home; and 37% identified as BIPOC.</p>
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## Progress toward annual goals

		Actual Results (Enter Data) Please only include new data for the specific quarter				Progress toward Annual Goal
Measure	Annual Goal	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	
# of Buncombe County residents helped by the Homeless Prevention Program	1640	1199	481	413	327	2420
# of Buncombe County closed and pending cases	750	549	225	201	162	1137
# of Buncombe County closed and pending cases served by this grant	131	65	27	24	19	136
Success rate obtaining a positive outcome	90%	100%	100%	99%	99%	99.5%

**Comments:**

**(The first two metrics include duplicates from the prior quarter given a case opened in one quarter may continue to be worked in the following quarter. In new quarters, we are only including new case numbers.)** In June we closed a case for Angela (name changed), a single mother facing eviction from public housing because of issues with the annual recertification of her family income. All residents of public housing need to recertify their income on a yearly basis to determine the rent they will pay, which, theoretically, is an amount they can afford. Angela had submitted all the necessary documentation for her recertification in June 2023 and thought everything was processed correctly to confirm she could only afford the minimum rent. Having received no notice of a change in her rent, she continued to pay the same amount. Facing tough times, Angela fell behind on her rent in late 2023, but paid the overdue amount in January 2024 plus late fees. In late February Angela's neighbor brought her a paper which was a court document stating he was being evicted and on the other side was a court document stating Angela was being evicted as well. Angela had not received her own notice of eviction on her door but checked her mailbox to discover a letter from management saying that she owed \$2,566 and had 14 days to vacate the apartment. Angela immediately knew something was amiss with her income recertification and became incredibly nervous that she and her son would be forced out of the apartment and have nowhere else to go. A friend referred Angela to Pisgah Legal Services, and she reached out directly. Attorney Justin Pack investigated Angela's situation and advised her on how to represent herself in court. Unfortunately, a judgement to evict was entered against her so Attorney Pack helped Angela file an appeal, researched her income recertification from 2023, and contacted the opposing counsel to negotiate the situation. Through his research the amount of money the landlord stated Angela owed was for market rent not the minimum rent rate she should have been charged. In Attorney Pack's conversations with the opposing counsel, he was able to arrange for Angela to resubmit the income recertification paperwork, which was approved, and the arrears amount was significantly reduced to reflect the rental rate Angela should have been charged. Angela was able to secure rental assistance through the Department of Health and Human Services to cover the remaining balance and the eviction was dismissed allowing Angela and her son to stay in the apartment. Pisgah Legal has witnessed and helped many individuals and families facing the same challenges with the public housing recertification process. Our low-income neighbors jump through many hoops and do their due diligence to keep up with the guidelines of public housing or housing vouchers, but continually face uphill battles with the housing authority and other entities not processing paperwork in a timely manner, communicating with renters about their status, or altogether losing information/paperwork that renters have submitted. Without the help of Pisgah Legal, a large number of our low-income neighbors would be forced out of their homes with no options for other housing and become part of the ever-increasing homeless population in Buncombe County.

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## Use of funds to date and any budget considerations

Spending Category	Starting Budget	Total Spending (Enter Data)				Amount Remaining
		Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	
Personnel	\$ 64,000	\$ 16,000	\$ 16,000	\$ 16,000	\$ 16,000	\$ -
Training						\$ -
Supplies/Materials						\$ -
Meetings						\$ -
Equipment/Furniture						\$ -
Printing/Marketing						\$ -
Licensing/Memberships/Dues/Subscriptions						\$ -
Client Support						\$ -
Contracts						\$ -
Professional Services						\$ -
Insurance and Bonds						\$ -
Building Maintenance						\$ -
Total	\$ 64,000	\$ 16,000	\$ 16,000	\$ 16,000	\$ 16,000	\$ -

**Comments:**