

DRIVER'S LICENSE RESTORATION

Road to Successful Reentry

North Carolina Joint Reentry Council

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D.J. Dore, Director of Pro Bono

Duke Law School

Rick Glazier, Director

Blanchard Community Law Clinic

Dylan Bland, 3rd Year Law Student

Campbell Law School

Emily Mistr, Second Chance Project Director

Legal Aid of North Carolina

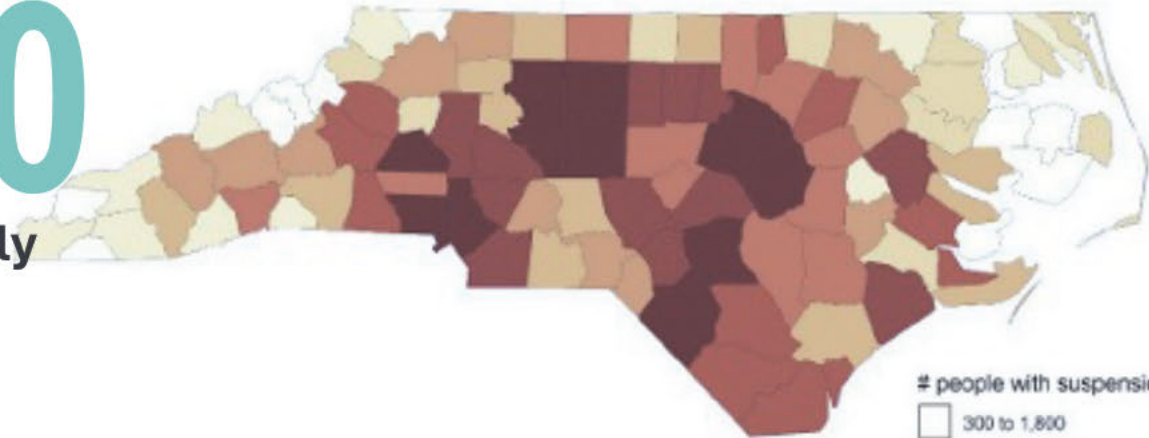
The Scale of the Problem

Understanding why driver's license restoration
is critical to reentry success

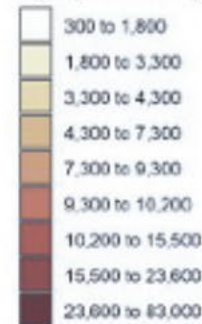
1 in 10 North Carolinians is Impacted by a Suspended License

900,000

North Carolinians currently have suspended licenses



people with suspensions



Many individuals are entirely unaware of their suspension or the underlying reason

Suspensions frequently stack across different counties and agencies, creating a bureaucratic maze

Suspensions are a Reentry Barrier

With 18,000+ individuals released from NC prisons annually, a valid driver's license is the foundational requirement for community reintegration.



Employment

Individuals cannot secure reliable transportation to get to work or maintain commercial driving jobs.



Housing

Rental applications and utility setups strictly require a valid, active state ID.



Family Reunification

Rebuilding family bonds and fulfilling caretaking duties requires physical mobility.



Legal Compliance

Releasing someone without a license forces them to drive suspended out of necessity, creating new criminal charges and guaranteeing a cycle of re-incarceration.

The Suspension Trap

1

Failure to Appear

Missed court dates — often due to lack of transportation or awareness (or for the justice-involved, lack of a global plea)

2

Unpaid Fines & Fees (Failure to Comply)

Court costs and fines that accumulate with poverty

3

DWI / Substance Abuse

Revocations requiring costly substance abuse assessment to resolve

4

DMV Hearing

Competent legal representation greatly increases a petitioner's likelihood for success

Bottom Line

The system is complex and nearly impossible to navigate without legal help.

The Opportunity

- ✓ Address license restoration before release — remove one of the biggest barriers to successful reentry
- ✓ DAC has a unique advantage: a population that is not actively driving!
- ✓ Clinics have proven the model works — now it's about scaling

Vision: Every person leaving an NC prison has:

- (1) an active driver's license, or
- (2) a valid ID and a clear path to license restoration



The Clinic Models

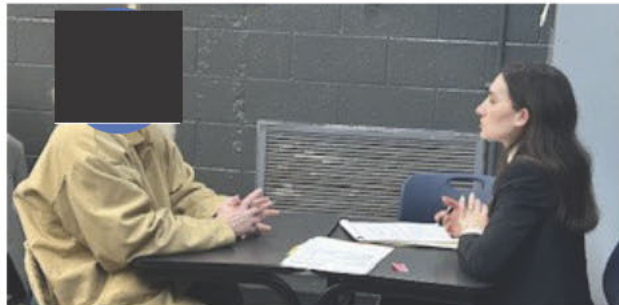
Two approaches, one mission: restoring licenses
inside correctional facilities

Two Models, One Mission

CAMPBELL LAW

For-Credit Clinical Model

- ✓ Upper-level students earn course credit
- ✓ Semester-long structured engagement
- ✓ Assigned individual caseloads
- ✓ Unique opportunities as a Certified Law Student



DUKE LAW

Experiential Pro Bono Model

- ✓ No class credit — extracurricular volunteer pro bono
- ✓ Highly scalable attorney:student ratio
- ✓ Hybrid or In-Person Clinics
- ✓ Partnership with Pisgah Legal Services



Blanchard Community Law Clinic

- 1 Assigned Caseloads**
Upper-level students receive individual clients and own the full case
- 2 Pre-Clinic Research**
Pull driving records, identify reasons for suspension, create restoration plans
- 3 Clinic Day**
One-on-one consultations at correctional facilities
- 4 Post-Clinic Follow-Up (incl court representation)**
File paperwork, coordinate with DMV, continue legal work



CAMPBELL
UNIVERSITY

Blanchard Community Law Clinic
Norman Adrian Wiggins School of Law



For-credit model ensures deep, semester-long engagement with built-in faculty oversight and sustained client relationships.

Duke Law Pro Bono Program



Duke Law
Office of Public Interest
and Pro Bono



1

Volunteer Model

No class credit — students participate through the Pro Bono Program (open to all class years and degrees)

2

Training First

Students trained on NC license restoration law before receiving case assignments

3

Clinic Execution

Nov 2025: hybrid | March 2026: Spring Break Pro Bono Trip

4

Supervision

4 supervising attorneys: Pisgah Legal, Duke Law, Orange County Restoration Attorney, Volunteer Private Attorneys



Highly scalable: large attorney-to-student ratio, flexible scheduling. For example: 10 students served 65 people during the March trip.

How a Clinic Works



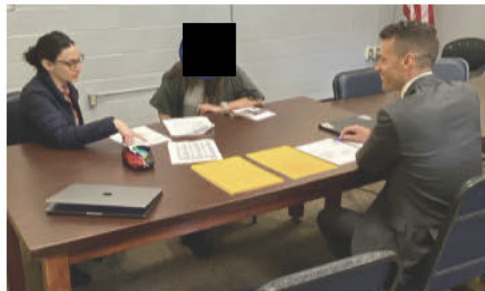
PRE-CLINIC Weeks Before

- ✓ DAC identifies participants
- ✓ Students analyze driving records
- ✓ Identify every suspension, revocation, etc.
- ✓ Create individualized restoration plans and advice letters



CLINIC DAY At the Facility

- ✓ Students + attorneys enter facility
- ✓ One-on-one consultations
- ✓ Walk clients through their record and advice letter
- ✓ Identify quick wins vs. complex issues



A WCCW client reviews her driving record with a first-year Duke Law Student and the Supervising Attorney



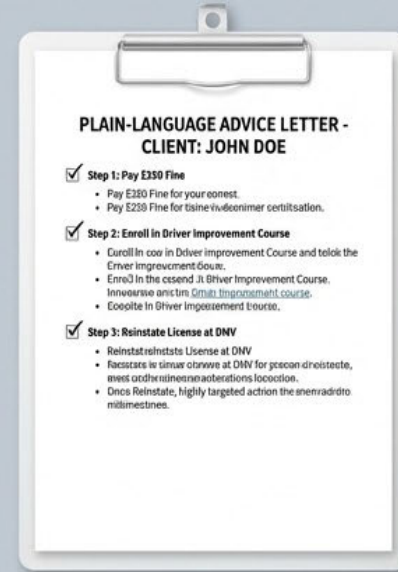
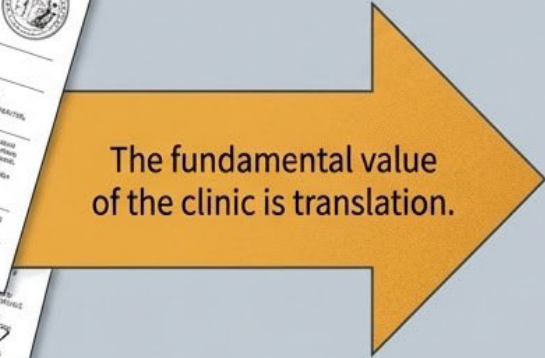
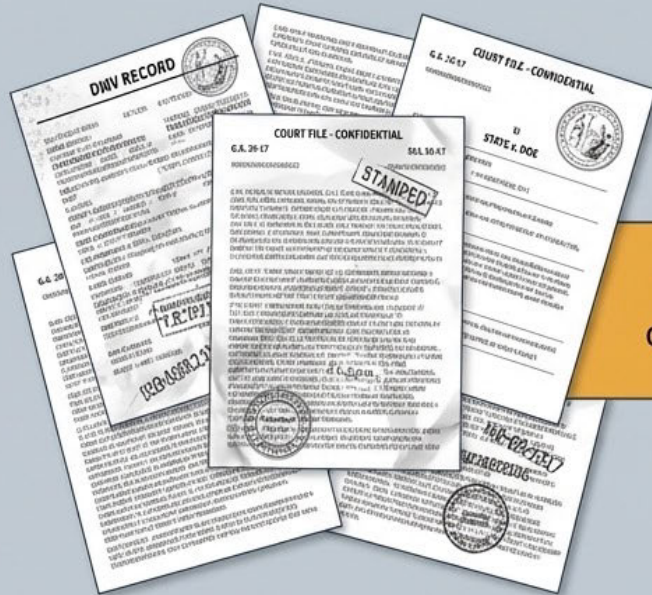
POST-CLINIC Follow-Up

- ✓ File paperwork & motions
- ✓ DMV coordination
- ✓ Referrals for ongoing legal needs
- ✓ Track outcomes

Plain-language Advice Letters break the information barrier for clients

Raw DMV driving records and county court files are written in complex legal codes that are impossible for a layperson to decipher.

The resulting Advice Letter provides a legally sound, plain-language, step-by-step checklist tailored to the specific client. It empowers the individual to take immediate, highly targeted action the moment they are released.



Clinics at a Glance

Craggy Correctional
Center
(Asheville)



Western Correctional
Center for Women
(Swannanoa)

Johnston Correctional
Institution
(Smithfield)

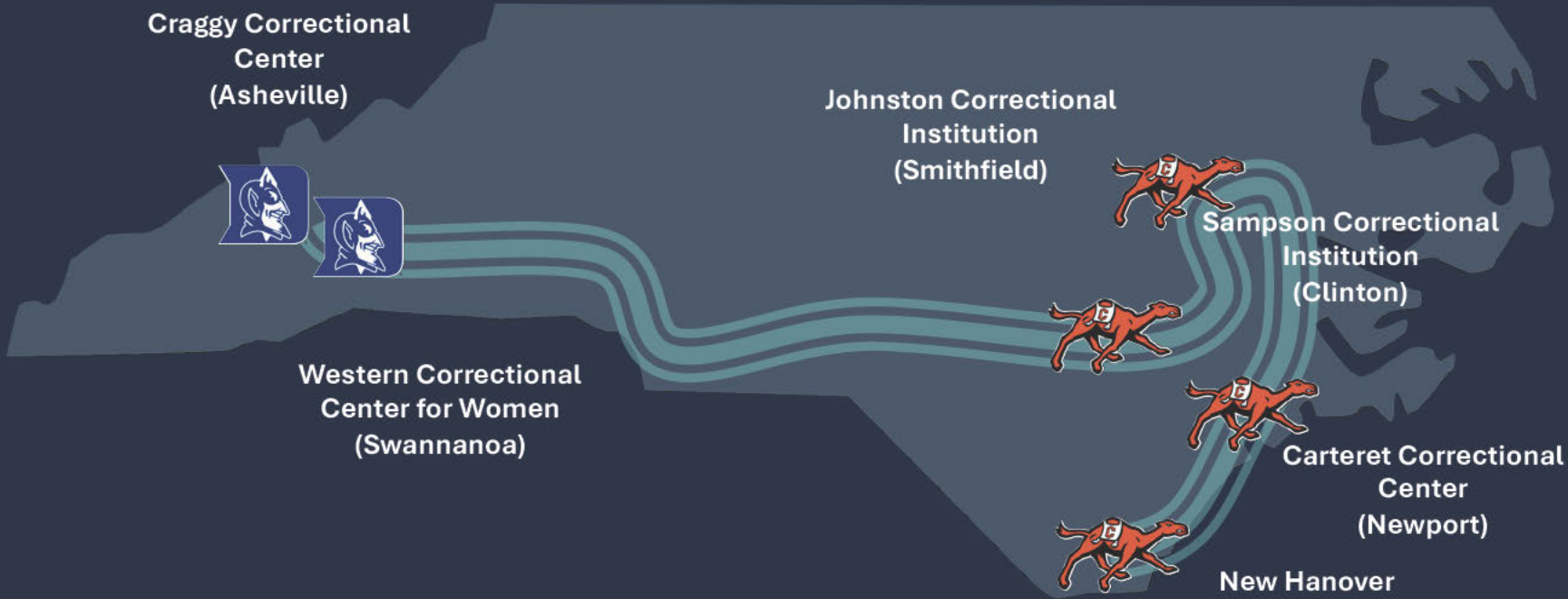


Sampson Correctional
Institution
(Clinton)



Carteret Correctional
Center
(Newport)

New Hanover
Correctional Center
(Wilmington)

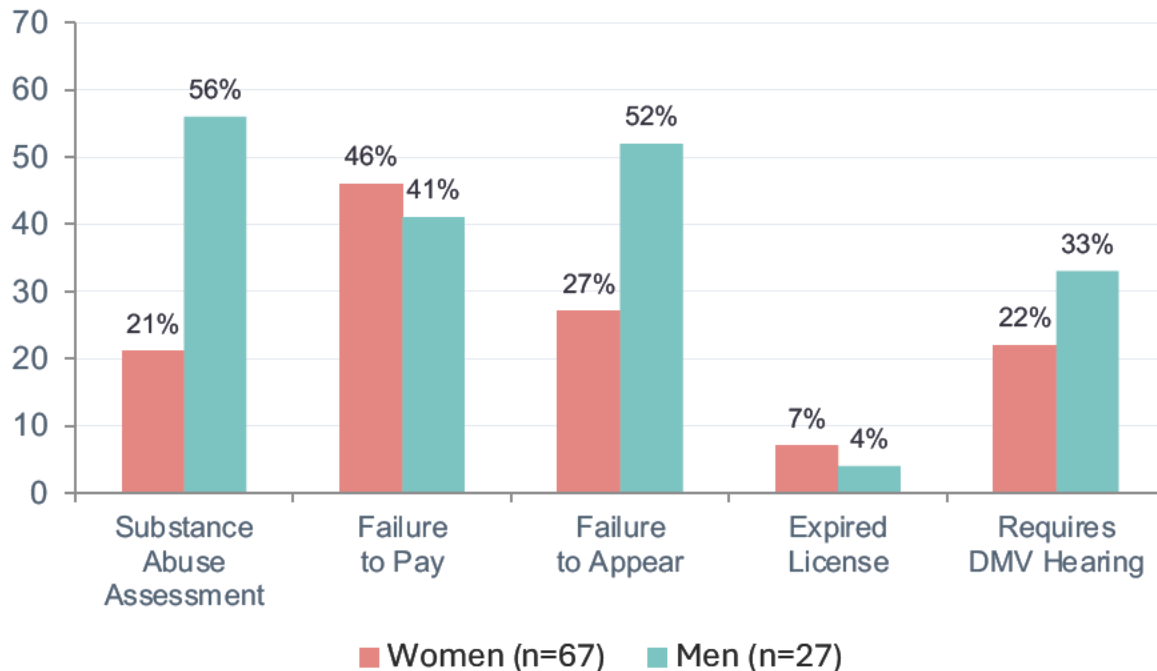


What the Data Shows

Learnings from Duke Law's three clinics




Most Prevalent Issues: Women vs. Men




Key Takeaway

Many of the barriers to license restoration are administrative — rooted in poverty and lack of resources, not punitive responses to criminal behavior.


Key Patterns & Insights

 **56%**
of men need SA
assessment


Substance abuse assessment is the **#1 issue for men** (56% vs. 21% women) — underscores the need to integrate SA assessment and treatment into DAC's Reentry work

 **46%**
of women have
failure to pay

Failure to pay is the top issue for women (46%); **21% have it as their only issue** — a purely financial barrier that legal help and fee relief can resolve

 **52%**
of men have FTA
issues

Failure to appear is nearly twice as prevalent for men (52% vs. 27% women), including **15% of men who have FTA as their sole issue**. For anyone serving an active sentence, this should be a quick administrative fix

 **22–33%**
require DMV
hearings

DMV hearings affect both groups significantly (22% women, 33% men) — clients are far more likely to succeed with legal representation

The throughline: these are solvable problems prior to reentry if people get the right legal help at the right time.



Action Items for NC DAC

Recommendations to scale and strengthen
driver's license restoration work for justice-involved individuals

Fund More Broadly & Sustainably

Current State

The current model relies on volunteer law students, clinical faculty, and pro bono attorneys. This is not sustainable at the scale needed — 18,000 releases/year across dozens of facilities throughout the state.

What's Needed

- ✓ Legal aid partnerships
- ✓ Standardized training programs
- ✓ Clinic coordination & logistics
- ✓ Facility access & Admin support

Use Existing Experts

North Carolina already has organizations doing this work — don't reinvent the wheel.

Legal Aid Organizations

- Pisgah Legal Services
- Legal Aid of North Carolina
- Orange County CJRD

Law School Partners

- ✓ Duke Law
- ✓ Campbell Law
- UNC Law, Wake Forest Law, NCCU Law...

DAC should be the convener and funder — let legal experts do the legal work.

Integrate Services for Greater Impact



Substance Abuse Assessment

56% of men in Duke Law's clinics need substance abuse assessment & treatment for license restoration.

- ✓ Integrate DAC's ACDP into SA treatment plans
- ✓ Short-term: Coordinate with current DHHS-approved assessors for facility visits
- ✓ Long-term: Offer SAA in-house



DMV Hearing Help

28% of clients in Duke Law's clinics require a DMV hearing — these are complex and clients fair better with legal representation.

- ✓ Hearing preparation & legal coaching
- ✓ Representation at DMV hearings
- ✓ Navigate DMV bureaucracy on clients' behalf (limited driving privilege)
- ✓ Consider a dedicated DMV liaison within DAC reentry programming

A driver's license is not a luxury.

It's the road to successful reentry.

QUESTIONS?