

MEDIA RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 24, 2025

RESPONSE TO FRANKLIN COUNTY DECISION TO NOT RENEW INTERLOCAL CONTRACT AGREEMENT FOR HUMAN SERVICES

Kennewick, WA – Benton County is issuing this response to a recent media statement from Franklin County regarding the decision to not renew the contract agreement for Human Services, following Benton County's letter dated August 26, 2025.

Contrary to Franklin County's release, Benton County's letter from the Board of Commissioners was not an ultimatum, but a documented effort to renew the interlocal agreement with updated language to fairly and equitably share liabilities between the two government agencies. Benton County currently shoulders significant risk in providing critical services—including behavioral health, developmental disabilities, homelessness support, and juvenile justice—on behalf of multiple municipalities. Our proposal aimed to include provisions that would distribute liability related to the claims between the counties fairly. This approach is standard business practice designed to protect taxpayers and ensure responsible governance. It is unreasonable for Benton County taxpayers alone to bear the entire financial and legal responsibility while Franklin County assumes none with the same benefits.

The impact of Franklin County's decision to not renew the Human Services Contract with Benton County is significant. While many of the services are provided through grants from the State of Washington and will continue until Benton County can determine the appropriate path forward, any programs funded with local tax revenues will cease for Franklin County residents until they can stand up their own programs. This includes some level of homeless housing assistance and the veterans support programs.

We want to clarify recent statements regarding proposed increased charges and its impact to Franklin County's general fund. Benton County has not proposed any new fees in the updated agreement. The revised agreement continues the collaborative arrangement that has been in place since 2020. If Franklin County has decided that this arrangement is no longer affordable, or they must approach funding differently, that is entirely within their discretion.

However, any suggestion that Benton County is seeking a significant cost increase or has demanded several hundred thousand dollars more per year is false. No new fees have been added, and the updated agreement does not substantially change the cost structure. Claims to the contrary are inaccurate.

The only increase in the agreement reflects the addition of a second Veteran's Service Officer, a position both counties approved in 2024. Benton County hired a second VSO after both counties approved the veteran's assistance fund policy earlier this year. Costs will be split evenly, and the agreement has been updated accordingly.

Benton County confirms that; besides the additional VSO, the updated agreement only increases Franklin County's expenditures by the 2.5% increase on the usual \$5,000 monthly fee. All other costs remain unchanged. The previous Human Services agreement and the proposed renewal sent to Franklin County is posted on Benton County's [website](#).

Benton County has offered to enter into a new agreement until June 30, 2026. This will continue vital community services while a transition plan is developed to allow Franklin County to take over those services for their residents.

The County Administrators from both Counties are meeting to reach a reasonable agreement to help that transition happen.

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Benton County is located in south-central Washington. The county seat is located in Prosser, and its largest city is Kennewick. Benton County was created on March 8, 1905 and was named after U.S. Senator Thomas Hart Benton. Benton County operates under the plural executive form of government with three commissioners and seven other elected officials. Benton County has offices located in Prosser and Kennewick. For more information, visit our [website](#).