

**Benton-Franklin
Health District**
www.bfhd.wa.gov

Kennewick
7102 West Okanogan Place

Pasco
412 West Clark Street

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**Benton-Franklin Health
District Website**
www.bfhd.wa.gov

**Washington Department
of Health**
www.doh.wa.gov

**Centers for Disease
Control**
www.cdc.gov

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Board of Health Approves Moving Forward

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 5, 2020

KENNEWICK — The Benton-Franklin Health District Board of Health voted yesterday to approve the Health Officer’s recommendation to submit an official application to move forward to Phase 2 under Governor Inslee’s Safe Start Plan.

“The decision to recommend applying for Phase 2 was made after careful consideration of what would best support the overall health and well-being of the community,” said Dr. Amy Person, Health Officer. “Although case counts continue to increase, data shows that a significant portion of new cases are related to outbreaks in essential businesses and an increase in risk behaviors by individuals, suggesting that the expected rise in infection rates may not be as significantly affected by moving to Phase 2 compared to remaining in Phase 1.”

Community recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic does not occur in a vacuum. Efforts to mitigate and control the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus must also consider the consequences of those efforts on the economic, social, and emotional well-being of the community. Financial hardship, social disconnectedness, and despair have impacted the ability of individuals in the community to continue to take the necessary steps to reduce the spread of infection. Phase 1 restrictions are preventing bi-county residents from accessing much-needed mental health resources, including support groups for substance abuse and depression.

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Benton-Franklin Health District has been working closely with health care partners and community leaders to ensure there will be adequate public health capacity to manage the anticipated increase in cases. In an additional effort to increase individual behaviors that protect against the spread of COVID-19, Dr. Person also issued a Health Officer Directive requiring facial coverings when people are indoors public places and outdoor public settings where safe physical distancing cannot be maintained.

The complete applications will be submitted by the counties early next week to the Washington State Department of Health, who has the final say on the process. Jason Zaccaria, Benton-Franklin Health District administrator, says they expect to hear back from state health officials about their decision in about one week after the submissions.

The counties will remain in Phase 1 until the application is approved. Residents are advised to practice physical distancing and hand hygiene throughout all phases of reopening.

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