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Yakima County Commissioners devote \$1.1 million of mental health tax to court, corrections

Phil Ferolito; Yakima Herald-Republic, Wash.

Dec. 21—Yakima County Commissioners on Tuesday approved spending more than \$1.1 million of a mental health sales tax on county law and justice services.

Commissioners earlier this year talked about strengthening those services in hopes of reducing recidivism at the county jail and in the court system by helping offenders embark on recovery services.

The measure approved during Tuesday's regular business meeting committed \$111,914 to Corrections for medical assisted treatment services; \$522,374 to District Court for probation services, and another \$77,239 for DUI court; \$220,445 to a Superior Court drug court program; \$76,176 to the Clerk's Office, and \$111,822 to the Department of Assigned Council.

Commissioners said they would look at possibly funding other services such as homeless programs once county-provided services were funded with the tax.

A previous board of Yakima County Commissioners approved the 0.1% sales tax in 2019 in an effort to help those experiencing homelessness. Revenue from the tax can be used for projects providing mental health and substance abuse treatment.

The tax is expected to generate more than \$3.5 million a year.

Earlier this year, the mental health tax fund had an accumulated balance of \$13 million. Spending approved Tuesday takes effect in January.