

Waste prevention project example

Reusable storage containers to replace disposables

Reusable containers and bags can replace disposable options to reduce waste and save energy and resources over their lifetimes.



Healthcare involves a lot of single-use medical supplies that create a large quantity of disposable waste, but reusable products can work in health care settings when you think creatively. At Fairview Health Services in Minneapolis, a nurse in the surgical department noted that they use about 100 single-use plastic bags each day for same-day patient's belongings. The nurse applied for and received a grant from Hennepin County to buy reusable containers to replace the single-use bags. The containers can be sanitized between patients.

Staff members received a kick-off email informing them about the reusable bins replacing single-use plastic bags for patient belongings, and the hospital's efforts to reduce waste. The nurse who started the project monitored the bins, making sure they were being used properly, and was available to answer questions. The availability of single-use bags was also eliminated so that the reusable bins were the only option.

Pictured: Reusable container for patient belongings at Fairview Health Services

Setting this up at your business

1. Consider what single-use items your business currently uses.
2. Research reusable options that could replace the single-use items (containers, equipment).
3. Put together disinfecting and usage procedures so staff know how to use the reusable items.
4. Talk to management about your desire to reduce waste and have answers to the most likely questions ready such as how much waste or money it may save.

Costs to consider

- Reusable containers/bags/packaging
- Sanitizing reusable items
- Storage space for reusable items

Waste prevention grants available

Hennepin County has a grant program to fund projects that prevent waste in the business sector. Areas of focus include replacing disposables with reusables, food waste prevention and innovative projects around research and development (to prevent waste). Learn more and apply at: hennepin.us/businesswasteprevention

Contact

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