

Recycling Champion Toolkit

(Applicable for Green+Leaders at sites where standardized recycling has been implemented)

Objective

The objective of this toolkit is to improve the efficacy of the standardized recycling system through:

- Decreasing the amount of contamination in recycling containers;
- Increasing the volume of materials recycled

Background

The Lower Mainland Health Authorities launched the Recycling Renewal Project to incorporate basic recycling into acute care sites over the last couple of years. Because we are recycling in a health care setting, medical contamination in recycling bins is a serious issue and, in some cases, puts the whole program at risk.

The health and safety of workers who handle the recycling once it leaves the site is jeopardized when medical materials are improperly placed in recycling bins.

Green+Leaders can play an important role in ensuring the success of the program by helping to reduce contamination rates and identify issues with bin placement, missing signs, communication to staff and more.

Steps

Step 1:

Speak with your manager or director to bring them on board. Let them know your concerns about and goals for improving the Recycling Renewal Program in your department/unit. If possible, have them send out an email or speak at a meeting to remind the team about what can and can't go in the bins, and to discuss ways to make the program more effective.

Step 2:

Use the [audit tool](#) to take a look at the recycling containers in your area, to assess the contamination rates. Pay special attention to see if any of the following medical contamination items are in the containers:

- IV Bags
- Syringes
- Tubing
- Gloves
- Specimen containers
- Injectable glass vials
- Plastic urinals

Do not handle any contents with your hands.

*Use the [Recycling Guide](#) to identify what should be recycled in each stream. (<https://bcgreencare.ca/resource/rrp-recycling-and-waste-segregation-guide>)

Step 3:

Provide the following information to your colleagues preferably in a staff meeting. If that is not possible, send an email.

Sample email

As you likely know, our site is now able to recycle many items through the [Recycling Renewal Program](#). Although we've seen some great improvements in the amount of recycling since the program has been in place, we know we can do more.

In a recent review of a typical day's garbage, we found X amount of recyclables in the bin, as well as X amount of medical contamination.

Please remember that we need to keep item such as empty IV bags, empty syringes, empty tubing, gloves, empty specimen containers, injectible glass vials and empty plastic urinals out of the recycling bins. When medical waste is placed in recycling it threatens the health and safety of workers who handle these materials and puts the whole program at risk.

Here are few more reasons we can feel good about keeping our recycling program in shape:

- Recycling materials keeps toxins out of the air, land and water by reducing incineration and the production of leachate that can seep into groundwater and soil.
- It's good for the climate! Statistics Canada estimates that up to 25% of our country's carbon emissions come from landfills, which produce methane (a powerful greenhouse gas) as the garbage decomposes.
- When we recycle, we're reusing valuable raw materials and reducing the need extract new resources from the Earth through practices like mining.

If you have suggestions for or questions about improving our recycling efforts, please contact _____.

Over the next few months, we'll send you further updates on our team's progress!

Thank you for your efforts to make the Recycling Renewal Program a success,

Step 4:

Talk to three or four people in your department... get feedback on the following:

- Are there enough bins
- Do people know where the bins are
- Do people know what to recycle
- Is the signage effective
- Do people generally support recycling

Step 5:

Review the "[Actions to Reduce Contamination](#)" guidelines to ensure your bins meet these standards. (https://bcgreencare.ca/system/files/resource-files/RRP_ActionsToReduceContamination.pdf)

If additional bins, sign frames or other supplies are needed, contact the Sustainability Consultant Marianne Dawson, Marianne.dawson@fraserhealth.ca

Step 6:

Continue to conduct audits every two to three weeks, until contamination rates are less than 5%.

Communicate your findings to your colleagues, and to the Green+Leaders Program Lead, sarah.currie@fraserhealth.ca