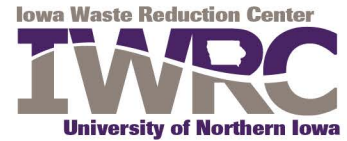


Food Waste Reduction in Hospitals



Case Study

Greene County Medical Center | Jefferson, Iowa

The cafeteria at the Greene County Medical Center is open seven days a week and serves 350-400 meals per day to patients, the community and employees, as well as 1-12 meals per day to the local jail.

As of Spring 2016, food waste generation rates had never been calculated and a majority of the food waste was being discarded down the garbage disposal.

IWRC's Jenny Trent met with Amy Becker, Director of Nutritional Services at the medical center as well as other staff. First, they discussed options to reduce food waste at the source. This included options like monitoring food waste to know what's being thrown away, going trayless, following a "first-in, first out" policy to move older foods to the front of the refrigerator and freezer, reduce plate size, proper storage, and repurpose leftovers and food about to spoil.

Becker decided the best course of action to get started was to begin monitoring what was being thrown away in the trash or discarded down the disposal. Trent provided scales and tracking sheets so the center could really understand how much and what kinds of food were being wasted from the kitchen most frequently.

Tracking began in September 2016.



Food Waste Tracked

from Sep 1 - Sep 8, 2016



Greene County Medical Center is located in Greene County, Iowa and services over 9,000 residents within the community.

The Iowa Waste Reduction Center and the University of Northern Iowa are equal opportunity providers and employers.

1-319-273-8905
iwrc.uni.edu/food-waste

A Better Understanding

With just preliminary data from one week, Becker reported the staff was already thinking about other ways to start making changes. For example, Ever Greene Ridge was the second highest producer of food waste even though only six people at that facility eat. And staff now have a better understanding of the food needs of different facilities.

The hospital food items are made to order while the cafeteria items are not. Leftovers from Long Term Care are often used up. And staff have been working on cutting down cafeteria waste so they have quality foods in more limited supplies, resulting in less waste at the end of the meal.

Becker provides an opportunity for staff to analyze the top five foods being thrown away from the kitchen at Greene County Medical Center. Staff is invested in reducing food waste because they are the ones tracking everything that goes in the garbage or down the garbage disposal.

Getting Everyone Involved

One of the best parts of the Greene County Medical Center initiative is that Becker's entire staff is involved. Tracking stations were set up in the kitchen right next to garbage cans so each staff member that handles food waste records the weight of the food, type of food, and the reason for disposal prior to throwing it away. Then after a week of tracking, staff get together and analyze the top five foods being thrown away.



Even with the process just getting started, staff have come up with some easy ways to reduce how much food is being tossed out by monitoring and analyzing their current food waste. Techniques that Becker and the staff are looking at include the following:

- Prepared leftover food servings that are thrown away may indicate too much is being prepared
- Prepared food servings that are thrown away may indicate a recipe change is in order
- Ordering food more frequently provides an opportunity to manage less food at one time and use it up faster
- Conducting frequent inventories of food items can help in selecting menu recipes to use up these items
- Inspect fresh food orders upon arrival to make sure food is fresh
- Donate food that is not going to be eaten but is still edible

Greene County Medical Center is on the right track. They are a great example of how tracking and monitoring food waste can lead to change. In essence, these changes are inexpensive and easy to implement which allows the center to make a difference in the amount of food being wasted as well as their bottom line.

Becker organized staff for training on how to track kitchen food waste in September, 2016.

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